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SALAR

DIGITAL ENGLISH DAILY, BENGALURU

ساڵار روزنامہ بنگلور

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K'taka hikes milk prices by Rs 4 per litre from 1 April

BENGALURU 27 MARCH

The Cabinet on Thursday approved a Rs 4 per litre hike in Nandini milk prices from 1 April.

Regular milk will now cost Rs 46 per litre, while special varieties such as Shubham milk may rise to Rs 54 per litre. The price increase will also impact curd and other dairy products.

Of the hike, Rs 3 will go to farmers, while Rs 1 will be allocated to Karnataka Milk Federation (KMF) to cover operational expenses.

The price increase has sparked criticism, with some citizens expressing frustration over the rising cost of living. "At this rate, it's better to buy a cow and start milking ourselves," said Sindhu, an entertainment producer. Chetan, a finance analyst, suggested that people should switch to cheaper alternatives such as black coffee and green tea.

- Of the hike, Rs 3 will go to farmers, while Rs 1 will be allocated to KMF to cover operational expenses.

K Venkatesh, Minister for Animal Husbandry and Sericulture, told Salar News, "The increase in milk prices ensures fair compensation for farmers, whose production costs have risen due to higher expenses in feed, transportation, and labour. If farmers are not adequately paid, milk production could decline." He added that Karnataka's milk procurement prices remain lower than in neighbouring states.

KMF Chairman Bheema Naik did not respond to calls for Salar News.

However, some ministers reportedly raised concerns about public backlash, especially with upcoming local body elections. "The price hike could fuel voter dissatisfaction and impact electoral prospects," an anonymous government source admitted.

The hike comes in the wake of previous price increases on bus fares, fuel, electricity, and metro tickets, further straining household budgets. *—Salar News*

KMF milk/curd varieties

Toned Milk (Blue packet)	Shubham Milk (Orange packet)
Existing price/L Rs 42	Existing price/L Rs 48
New price/L Rs 46	New price/L Rs 52
Homogenised Toned Milk	Curd
Existing price/L Rs 43	Existing price/L Rs 50
New price/L Rs 47	New price/L Rs 54
Cow's Milk (Green packet)	
Existing price/L Rs 46	
New price/L Rs 50	

K'taka to conduct survey of SCs for internal quota

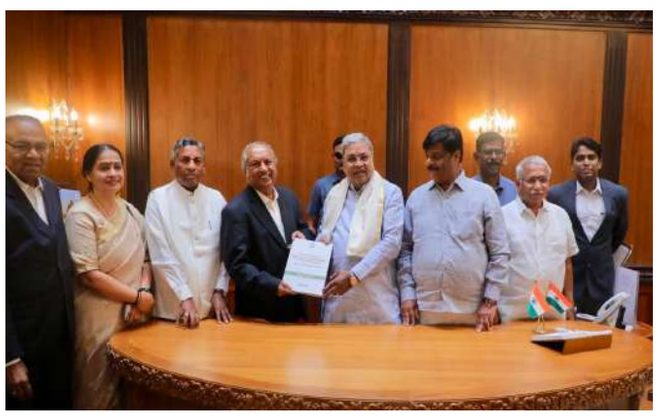
Tenure of Nagmohan Das Commission extended by 2 months

BENGALURU, 27 MARCH

Accepting Justice HN Nagmohan Das Commission's interim report, the Cabinet on Thursday decided to go for a survey of Scheduled Castes (SCs) in the State, to decide on internal reservation among them.

The one-man commission of the retired High Court judge submitted the interim report to Chief Minister Siddaramaiah earlier in the day, just ahead of the Cabinet meeting.

The government has been under pressure from SC communities and from within Congress to implement internal reservation at the earliest, for which empirical data is needed, and the government has decided to go by the recommendation of the commission to gather the data.



CM Siddaramaiah receives the interim report of the committee headed by retired Justice Nagamohan Das **PHOTO: X/@SIDDARAMAIAH**

The internal reservation is aimed at slicing up the 17 per cent reservation matrix given to 101 scheduled castes.

Law and Parliamentary Affairs Minister H K Patil said to ensure that the internal reservation process happens at a fast pace, it has been decided to request Justice Nagmohan Das Commission to oversee new survey and gathering of data.

"The commission has suggested that 40 days is required for the survey to be completed, so it has been decided to extend the commission's tenure by two months," he added.

A section of SCs, especially 'SC Left', have been demanding internal reservation, alleging that only a few influential sub-castes were taking away a majority of the benefits, while many communities were still marginalised.

The government, in November 2024, appointed Justice Das to head a commission to recommend internal reservation among SCs, after the Supreme Court last year allowed the states to provide internal reservation, and the State Cabinet agreed to implement internal reservation. *—PTI*

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Putin to visit India soon

MOSCOW, 27 MARCH

Russian President Vladimir Putin has accepted an invitation from Prime Minister Narendra Modi to visit India, with preparations for the trip currently underway, according to Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov.

Vladimir Putin. **PHOTO: PTI**

During a video address to a conference titled "Russia and India: Toward a New Bilateral Agenda," hosted by the Russian International Affairs Council (RIAC), Lavrov stated, "Arrangements are currently being made for Putin to visit India." He confirmed that the Russian leader has accepted Modi's invitation, underscoring the significance of the proposed visit.

While the specific dates for the trip have yet to be announced, Lavrov highlighted the importance of the relationship between the two nations. He noted that Modi's first foreign visit after his re-election last year was to Russia, remarking, "Now it's our turn."

Prime Minister Modi last visited Russia in July 2024, marking his first trip to the country in nearly five years. During that visit, he extended the invitation for Putin to visit India. Additionally, Modi attended an economic conclave in Vladivostok in 2019.

On 24 March, Lavrov mentioned that Russia is forging a "privileged strategic partnership" with India while also expanding ties with other nations, including China, Iran, and the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS). In a message commemorating India's 76th Republic Day in January, Putin referred to the Russian-Indian relationship as a "special and privileged strategic partnership." *—PTI*

M'rashtra woman's body found in suitcase in B'luru

BENGALURU, 27 MARCH

The body of a 32-year-old woman, Guri Khedekar, was found stuffed in a suitcase near Ambedkar Apartment in Doddanekundi Village in Hulimavu police station limits.

Sarah Fathima, DCP South-East Bengaluru told ANI, "She was the wife of Rakesh Rajendra Khedekar (36 years). Her body was found in a suitcase. The husband and wife were living in Hulimavu police station limits. Both belonged to Maharashtra. The body has been sent for postmortem."

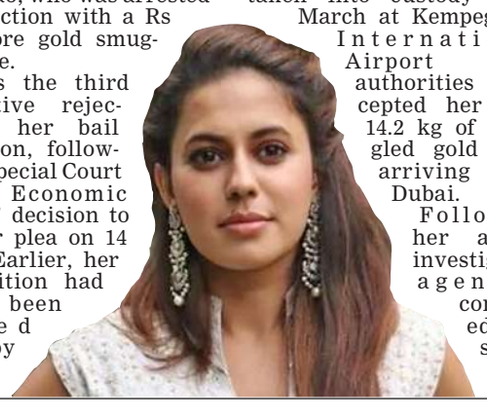
This case comes after a 29-year-old woman, Mahalakshmi, was killed, chopped into pieces and stored in a refrigerator in her Malleshwaram apartment. The police identified a prime suspect from Odisha, who was believed to be hiding in West Bengal. The suspect later allegedly killed himself. The forensic analysis team and the Scene Of Crime Officers are analysing the crime scene. *—Salar News*

No bail for Ranya in gold smuggling

BENGALURU, 27 MARCH

The 64th City Civil (CCH) Sessions Court in the city on Thursday dismissed the bail plea of Kannada actress Ranya Rao, who was arrested in connection with a Rs 12.56 crore gold smuggling case.

This is the third consecutive rejection of her bail application, following the Special Court for Economic Offences' decision to deny her plea on 14 March. Earlier, her bail petition had also been turned down by the Magistrate Court.



Harshavardhini Ranya, popularly known as Ranya Rao, daughter of Karnataka DGP-rank officer K Ramachandra Rao, was taken into custody on 3 March at Kempegowda International Airport after authorities intercepted her with 14.2 kg of smuggled gold upon arriving from Dubai.

Following her arrest, investigative agencies conducted a search at her residence, where they reportedly seized gold ornaments worth Rs 2.06 crore and Rs 2.67 crore.

The Directorate of Revenue Intelligence (DRI) on Wednesday night arrested Sahil Jain, a gold dealer from Ballari, for allegedly assisting Ranya in disposing of the smuggled gold and sharing the proceeds.

The case has seen multiple arrests, including that of Ranya and hotelier Tarun Raju, as authorities continue to unravel the network behind the high-profile smuggling operation.

Investigators are now focusing on identifying other potential accomplices involved. *—Salar News*

BILLIONAIRES' WEALTH IS 3RD OF GDP

Gautam Adani is biggest wealth gainer

- 284 billionaires in India. Their cumulative wealth rose by 10% to Rs 98 lakh cr.
- Adani saw Rs 1 lakh cr jump in fortune to Rs 8.4 lakh cr
- Reliance Industries' Mukesh Ambani saw 13% decline in wealth to Rs 8.6 L cr. His $100B fortune helped him reclaim richest Asian title.
- HCL's Roshni Nadar with a net worth of Rs 3.5 l cr is the richest Indian woman, and 5th richest woman globally.
- Mumbai lost the tag of Asia's billionaire capital to Shanghai. It has 90 super-rich people.
- Healthcare industry has most billionaires at 53, followed by consumer goods.
- The average age of Indian billionaires is 68.
- Shashank Kumar, 34, and Harshil Mathur, 34, of Razorpay are the youngest billionaires with Rs 8,643 cr each.

Source: Hurun Global Rich List.

NAMAZ ON SAMBHAL ROADS PROHIBITED

SAMBHAL, 27 MARCH

Sambhal's Additional Superintendent of Police, Shreesh Chandra, said that while traditional methods of offering namaz remain unrestricted, large gatherings on rooftops have been prohibited to prevent potential accidents.

Similarly, offering namaz on roads has also been banned to avoid traffic disruptions and safety hazards. Chandra assured that prayers within mosques and Eidgahs would be conducted traditionally without interference, emphasising that regulations against road-side prayers would remain in force. *—PTI*

2 terrorists killed, 5 jawans injured in Kathua encounter

JAMMU 27 MARCH

A confrontation in a remote forest in Kathua district has resulted in the deaths of two terrorists and injuries to five security personnel, including Special Police Officer Bharat Chalotra. The gunfight erupted as security forces intensified their operations against a group of about five militants near Jakhole village, following an earlier encounter where terrorists evaded capture. Officials believe the terrorists infiltrated the area on Saturday, possibly through a newly constructed tunnel from Pakistan. *—PTI*

JUST B'LURU THINGS

Vijayanagar bus stand disappears without a trace, BBMP clueless

HAMEED ASHRAF

BENGALURU, 27 MARCH

A bus shelter in Govindraj Nagar, near Sri Sarvajna Public School, has mysteriously disappeared, leaving commuters exposed to the harsh sun. To make the matter worse, Bruhat Bengaluru Mahanagara Palike (BBMP) authorities and the police have no knowledge of the incident.

"It was there on 1 March, but vanished the next day," said Ravi Kumar, a resident of MC Layout, Vijayanagar. "We thought it had been dismantled, but to our surprise, even the authorities are unaware."

The shelter was built in 2019 at Rs 19 lakh, according to former Govindraj Nagar corporator Umesh Shetty. "I've been trying to get answers from the BBMP for the last 15 days, but to no avail. If I, a former corporator, cannot get an answer, imagine the plight of ordinary citizens," he said.

MLA Priyakrishna also seemed unaware of the issue. "I don't know about this, but I'll look into it," he told **Salar News**.

Commuters are left stranded. "We thought it was under repair, but it has been dismantled," said Krishna, a regular commuter.

This incident is part of a worrying trend in Bengaluru. Bus shelters have been disappearing across the City, sometimes to make way for commercial projects, or even stolen for scrap. In August 2023, a shelter disappeared from Cunningham Road. However, BBMP later clarified that they had relocated it to their warehouse due to concerns about poor installation quality.

The shelter was built in 2019 at Rs 19 lakh **PHOTOS: SALAR**

Meanwhile, a Lions Club-donated shelter vanished in March 2023, despite a police complaint.

Residents also reported two more shelters missing near the Adichunchanagiri playground in the same area. Shetty suspects scrap dealers may be behind the disappearances.

Bengaluru Metropolitan Transport Corporation (BMTC) distanced itself from the matter, stating that if the shelter had been removed, it was likely BBMP's doing. But repeated attempts by Salar News to get a response from BBMP yielded no results.

Later on Thursday, a formal complaint was submitted to BBMP Chief Commissioner Tushar Girinath and Bengaluru Police Commissioner B Dayananda. However, no official response had been received at the time of reporting. *—Salar News*

Kalaburagi man gets 35 yrs in jail for raping minor

KALABURAGI, 27 MARCH

The Additional District and Sessions (Special POCSO) Court here on Wednesday sentenced a man to 35 years in prison for raping a minor girl multiple times. The man, Saibanna Naganna, 25, is a resident of a village that falls under the jurisdiction of Aland police station. He first raped the 15-year-old girl in a public toilet in Aland. Promising to marry her, he took her in a friend's car to Hubballi. From there, he took her to Haryana. After a case was registered at Aland police station, then sub-inspector Thirumalesha and inspector Mahadeva Panchamukhi conducted the investigation and filed the chargesheet.—*Salar News*

BMTC probes accident that claimed 2 lives

BENGALURU, 27 MARCH

The Bengaluru Metropolitan Transport Corporation (BMTC) has initiated an internal investigation into a fatal accident involving one of its electric buses and a two-wheeler near the ISRO Signal on HAL Main Road. The incident, which occurred on Wednesday night, resulted in the deaths of two individuals. A BMTC spokesperson confirmed that the investigation team visited the scene promptly and is working closely with the Jeevanbhima Nagar Traffic Police. The bus driver was detained on Thursday morning, while efforts continue to locate the absconding conductor. Preliminary investigations suggest that the two-wheeler, a Rapido bike, was attempting to overtake the bus when it collided with an oncoming car. The impact threw the riders, Tapan Tapadali, 31, and Aditya Bose, 32, under the rear wheels of the bus, resulting in their immediate death. —*Salar News*

Traffic cops launch app to report violations

BENGALURU, 27 MARCH

The Bengaluru Traffic Police (BTP) have urged the public to use the newly developed BTP-ASTraM app to report traffic violations. It replaces the now-defunct PublicEye app. Joint Commissioner of Police (Traffic) MN Anucheth said the authorities have integrated all reporting features of the PublicEye app into BTP-ASTraM, which is available on both the Google Play Store and the App Store. Launched earlier this year, BTP-ASTraM is designed to assist Bengaluru commuters in reporting traffic violations and accidents, as well as checking and paying fines for traffic offences. It also provides real-time traffic updates to help users plan their commute efficiently. One of its key features is the SoS emergency assistance button, which enables users to seek immediate help from nearby traffic police personnel. The traffic police have encouraged citizens to actively participate in monitoring traffic violations through the app. —*Salar News*

Girl dies by suicide after mom says no to phone

KAMALANAGAR, 27 MARCH

A 9th-grade girl took her own life after her mother denied her access to a mobile phone in Kalaburagi's Kamalanagar on Thurdasday. The incident highlights the growing concern over children's addiction to mobile devices. This follows a similar case in Bidar district, where a 15-year-old girl, Soni Santosh Banavase, took her life after her mother scolded her and took away her mobile phone due to excessive use. The incident occurred in Diggi village, and police are investigating. Help is available. Please call Tele Manas at 14416, SAHAI at 080-25497777 for support. —*Salar News*

EID RETAIL THERAPY

People shop for clothes, jewellery and sweets in Bengaluru on Thursday ahead of Eid-ul-Fitr, which marks the end of Ramadan month

PHOTOS: MOHAMMED ASAD

Justice Das panel to conduct survey of SCs in 40 days

Panel makes four major recommendations in report

BENGALURU, 27 MARCH

Law and Parliamentary Affairs Minister HK Patil said on Thursday said that the Justice Nagmohan Das Commission has made four major recommendations in the interim report on internal quota of Scheduled Castes (SCs).

Patil said they include conducting a fresh survey and gathering of data for scientific classification of sub castes among SCs; and that, using advanced scientific and technological devices, a new survey can be done in 30-40 days.

"It has also recommended for preparing a required questionnaire for a fresh survey, and constituting a high-level committee to oversee mobilisation of resources for the survey, and training of the staff required for it; and provisioning among the sub castes of SCs from quantum of reservation that is available by following the criterion mentioned in the report, on the basis of the data gathered from the new survey."

Social Welfare Minister HC Mahadevappa, responding to a question, said survey can be done in 40-45 days using advanced technologies.

Rejecting any "time pass or dodging of time" with the fresh survey, Mahadevappa said the government and Congress committed to providing internal reservation among SCs.

"If the data is scientifically accurate, there won't be any problem in the future. In Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, Haryana and other states they (internal reservation decisions) have landed in court, it should not happen," he added.

To a question on the need for a fresh survey, and whether the Census data was not available, Mahadevappa said, "Four major groups among SCs are not there in the census. If we don't include that data, it may be challenged in the court of law."

Earlier in the day, Justice Nagmohan Das, after submitting the interim report to the chief minister, said, "After in-depth study for more than two months by me and my team, I have submitted a 104-page report. The report was not submitted hurriedly. The government in fact has not asked us to submit the interim report, we have voluntarily given it."

Asked by reporters whether the interim report was a delay tactic, the retired judge said he doesn't think so. —*PTI*

Karnataka CM Siddaramaiah receives the interim report of the committee headed by retired Justice Nagamohan Das, which was formed to provide internal reservation for Dalit communities, in Bengaluru ***PHOTO: PTI***

'INJUSTICE METED OUT'

Yatnal expulsion triggers mass resignation in BJP

VIJAYPURA/BELAGAVI/ DHARWAD, 27 MARCH

Protesting against the expulsion of Vijayapur BJP MLA Basangouda Patil Yatnal from the primary membership of the party for six years, around a dozen local office bearers of the party's district unit on Thursday submitted their resignation letters. The move follows the resignation of almost all office bearers of the party's Vijayapura (city) unit on Wednesday.

The BJP's Vijayapura district secretary Siddu Hebbal, who also resigned alleging "injustice" meted out to Yatnal, said the party won in the constituency only because Yatnal was its candidate. The party also returned to power in Vijayapura city corporation because of Yatnal, he said.

"Those (with) vested interests who rampantly indulged in adjustment politics weakening the party in Karnataka and leading to its defeat in the impregnable fortress of BJP such as Kalburgi, Koppal, Raichur, Ballari, Chikkodi constituencies have gone scott free without any disciplinary action; while those who wanted to reform the party by wanting to end the one-upmanship and family-centred politics have been suspended or given notices," Yatnal posted on X.

BJP legislator Ramesh Jarkiholi on Thursday expressed confidence that the party will reconsider and withdraw the order for its better future, especially in Lingayat-dominated northern parts of the state. He said he would meet Yatnal in Bengaluru on Friday.

Meanwhile, Jaya Mrutyunjaya Swami of Kudalasangam mutt criticised the BJP for taking action against Yatnal. —*Salar News*

KERC slashes power tariff for businesses, hospitals

BENGALURU, 27 MARCH

The Karnataka Electricity Regulatory Commission (KERC) on Thursday announced a "significant reduction" in tariffs, providing relief to commercial, industrial, educational, and hospital consumers.

KERC has approved the Retail Supply Tariff for three years—2025- 26, 2026-27, and 2027-28.

For Low-Tension domestic lighting, the energy charge will be reduced by 10 paise in 2025-26 and by five paise in 2027-28, KERC said.

For LT industrial consumers, energy charges will be reduced by 160 paise per unit in 2025-26.

For HT commercial consumers, energy charges will be reduced by 205 paise per unit in 2025-26, while HT industrial energy charges will see a 30 paise per unit reduction. —*PTI*

SATISH MET HDK EYEING CM CHAIR: GTD

MYSURU, 27 MARCH

Former minister and senior JD(S) MLA GT Devegowda on Thursday said Congress minister Satish Jarkiholi has met the party top brass, including HD Kumaraswamy, seeking his support for him to become chief minister. Speaking to reporters in Mysuru, he said anything is possible in politics. "Senior Congress leader Satish Jarkiholi has chief ministerial ambitions. He met both former prime minister HD Deve Gowda and union minister HD Kumaraswamy, seeking their support as JD(S) has 18 MLAs in the Assembly," GTD said. —*Salar News*

CID begins probe into 'honey trap' on Minister

BENGALURU, 27 MARCH

Karnataka Cooperation Minister K N Rajanna's son and Congress MLC K N Rajendra on Thursday said officials from the Criminal Investigation Department (CID) of the state police have begun a preliminary investigation into the alleged attempts to "honeytrap" his father and had visited his official residence.

He stated that he had met Karnataka DGP and IGP Alok Mohan today to share information regarding an alleged attempt to "murder" him.

On Tuesday, Rajanna had submitted a petition to State Home Minister G Parameshwara, seeking a probe and necessary action regarding the alleged attempts to "honey-trap" him. —*PTI*

DESPITE HIGH FEES

Govt cracks down on paramedical colleges over poor infra, teaching

BENGALURU, 27 MARCH

Minister for Medical Education and Skill Development Sharan Prakash Patil has ordered the closure of paramedical colleges that fail to meet infrastructure and teaching standards.

The decision follows a review meeting, wherein officials reported glaring deficiencies in several private institutions, including inadequate facilities and a dearth of essential equipment, such as having a single microscope for hundreds of students.

Patil said many private institutions lie about facilities during the approval processes. Despite charging high fees, they fail in ensuring quality of education and leave students undertrained.

Of the 566 paramedical colleges in the State, 529 are privately run, enrolling 22,256 students in the 2024–25 academic year. Private institutions charge Rs 20,000 annually, compared to Rs 8,500 in government colleges, the minister was told.

Dr. Patil ordered the immediate closure of such colleges and assured that affected students would be transferred to better institutions.

The crackdown aims to ensure quality training in medical laboratory technology, imaging technology, health inspection and other paramedical courses.

The meeting was attended by Principal Secretary Mohammed Moshin, Director of Medical Education Dr BL Sujatha Rathod and Special Officer of the Para-Medical Board Dr Vijay Kumar. —*Salar News*

HC acts against judge for citing 'fake' SC verdicts

BENGALURU, 27 MARCH

The Karnataka High Court has directed action against a city civil court judge for citing non-existent Supreme Court rulings while deciding a case. In an order issued on March 24, Justice R Devdas expressed concern over the judge's conduct, stating that the issue warranted further investigation.

The High Court noted that the judge had cited two decisions that were never delivered by the Supreme Court or any other court. Senior Counsel Prabhuling Navadgi, representing the petitioners, pointed out that these rulings did not exist, as no records of them were found on the Supreme Court's website or other legal databases. Navadgi suggested that artificial intelligence tools, such as ChatGPT, could have generated fictitious

case laws, raising the possibility that the judge may have relied on such sources.

The High Court took the allegations seriously and ordered that a copy of the order be forwarded to the Chief Justice for further action against the judge.

The revision petition was allowed, with the court noting that the plaintiffs had attempted to file a fresh suit in a court lacking jurisdiction after withdrawing a previous one. —*PTI*

BBMP TO PRESENT BUDGET ON 29 MARCH

BENGALURU, 27 MARCH

Bengaluru's civic body, the Bruhat Bengaluru Mahanagara Palike (BBMP), will present its budget estimates for the financial year 2025-26 on 29 March from 11.00am at Sir Puttanna Chetty Town Hall. The session will be chaired by BBMP Administrator SR Umashankar, with Chief Commissioner Tushar Giri Nath in attendance. Special Commissioner of Finance, Dr K Harish Kumar, will present the budget, outlining key allocations and financial plans for the city's development. Several dignitaries and officials are expected to participate in the proceedings. The budget presentation will be streamed live on YouTube. —*Salar News*

PHOTO: PTI

97 fishermen in custody of Lanka, says Jaishankar

NEW DELHI, 27 MARCH

A total of 97 Indian fishermen are currently in the custody of Sri Lanka, of which 83 are serving sentences, three awaiting trial and 11 were apprehended on Thursday, External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar said in the Rajya Sabha. "In a way our government has inherited a problem," he said, claiming that decisions made in 1974 and 1976 were the root cause of the situation today. "So our efforts are on diplomatically to release people." *—PTI*

Indian fisherman in Pakistan jail since 2022 kills self

NEW DELHI, 27 MARCH

A 52-year-old Indian fisherman died allegedly by suicide at Malir Jail in Pakistan's Karachi, a jail official said on Thursday. "Gaurav Ram Anand on Tuesday night hanged himself," Jail Superintendent Arshad Hussain told PTI. Anand had been languishing in Malir Jail since February 2022 after being arrested for illegal fishing in Pakistan's territorial waters. The governments of Pakistan and India have regularly carried out exchanges of prisoners, mostly poor fishermen, as a goodwill measure. Anand's body will be handed over to his family after formalities. *—PTI*

HC issues notice in Patkar vs Saxena defamation case

NEW DELHI, 27 MARCH

The Delhi High Court has issued a notice to Lieutenant Governor VK Saxena in response to a plea by activist Medha Patkar, seeking to examine a new witness in her long-standing defamation case against him, dating back to 2000. Patkar, leader of the Narmada Bachao Andolan, alleges Saxena published defamatory ads while he was at the helm of an NGO in Gujarat. Justice Shalinder Kaur sought Saxena's response after a trial court dismissed Patkar's plea on 18 March, stating that the case has been pending for 24 years, and allowing new witnesses could delay proceedings. Patkar's application, filed on 17 February, aimed to include Nandita Narain as an additional witness. The next hearing is set for 20 May. *—PTI*

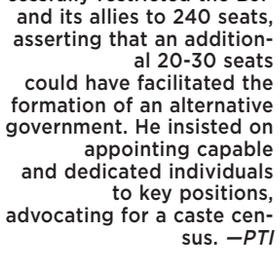


PHOTO: X

Kharge urges unity at Cong district Chief's meeting

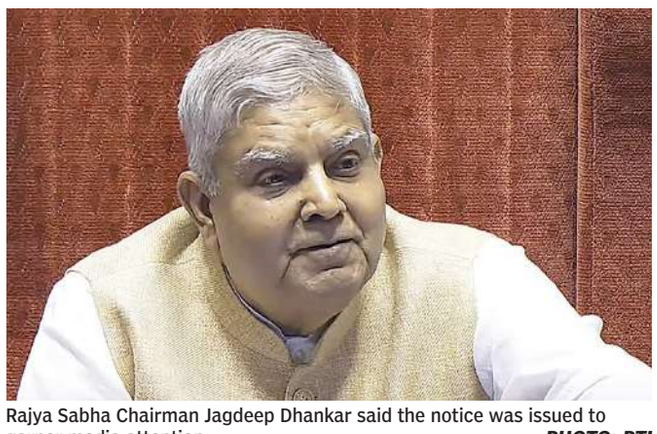
NEW DELHI, 27 MARCH

Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge has called upon the party's district unit chiefs to adopt a united front and long-term strategy in their efforts to secure victories in upcoming state elections. This was the first of such meets in years attend by 338 DCCs from 13 states and three union territories. During the first of three scheduled meetings with District Congress Presidents, Kharge highlighted the importance of wielding political power to implement the party's strong ideological stance. In reference to the 2024 Lok Sabha elections, Kharge noted that the INDIA bloc parties successfully restricted the BJP and its allies to 240 seats, asserting that an additional 20-30 seats could have facilitated the formation of an alternative government. He insisted on appointing capable and dedicated individuals to key positions, advocating for a caste census. *—PTI*

Dhankhar rejects privilege notice against Amit Shah

Asks Ethics Committee to lay fresh guidelines on MP's conduct

NEW DELHI, 27 MARCH



Rajya Sabha Chairman Jagdeep Dhankar said the notice was issued to garner media attention PHOTO: PTI

Rajya Sabha Chairman Jagdeep Dhankhar on Thursday rejected a privilege notice against Union Home Minister Amit Shah after the minister cited a 1948 government press release to authenticate his statement that the Gandhi family "used to control the country".

In his ruling on Congress general secretary Jairam Ramesh's breach of privilege notice, Dhankhar said Shah did not commit any "transgression" and that his statements during a debate earlier this week were in "absolute adherence to truth".

He went on to state that the breach of privilege was invoked in haste to get traction in the media and asked the House Ethics Committee to lay down fresh guidelines on MP's conduct on issues such as releasing communication with the chair or notices served.

Dhankhar said Shah agreed to authenticate his statement.

The Home Minister, he said, has backed his statement by producing a 24 January, 1948 press release issued by the government's Press Information Bureau that announced the then prime minister Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru's announcement of setting up of PMNRF.

"The Home Minister focused in categorical terms that this was the practice," he said. "I find there has been no transgression. There has been absolute adherence to truth which is vindicated by a document."

Ramesh had moved the notice against Shah for "casting aspersions" on Congress Parliamentary Party head Sonia Gandhi in Rajya Sabha on Tuesday.

"The Prime Minister's National Relief Fund was established during the Congress' rule, and the PM-CARES Fund was established during PM Narendra Modi and the NDA's rule. During Congress' rule only one family used to control the country," Shah had said, eliciting Ramesh to move the notice.

Meanwhile a delegation met Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla to flag denial of opportunity to Leader of Opposition Rahul Gandhi to speak in the House . *—PTI*

'INDIA NOT DHARAMSHALA'

Lok Sabha passes Immigration and Foreigners Bill

NEW DELHI, 27 MARCH

Lok Sabha passed the Immigration and Foreigners Bill, 2025 on Thursday, with Home Minister Amit Shah asserting that those who come to India for business, education and investment are welcome, but those who pose a threat to security will face stringent action.

"India is not a dharamshala," Shah asserted while replying to the debate on the Immigration and Foreigners Bill, 2025 in the Lok Sabha. The Bill was later passed by a voice vote after various Amendments moved by Opposition members were negated.

One of the key provisions in the Bill is that anyone found to be using a forged passport or visa for entering India or staying in or exiting from the country will be punishable with a jail term of up to seven years and a fine which could extend to Rs 10 lakh. The bill also seeks to ensure a close monitoring of everyone who visits India, Shah said.

The legislation also provides for mandatory reporting of information about foreigners by hotels, universities, other educational institutions, hospitals and nursing homes to enable tracking of overstaying foreigners.

He also hit out at the Trinamool Congress(TMC) and previous Congress government at the Centre for allowing Rohingiyas and Bangladeshis enter India.

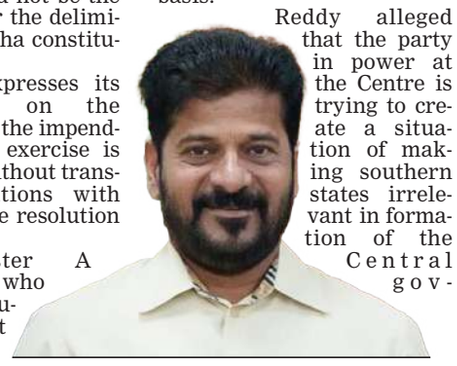
"Most of the Bangladeshis who have been caught have Aadhaar cards and voter cards," he said hitting out at the TMC. "If the Bengal government does not issue Aadhaar cards, then even a bird will not be able to fly," he said. *—PTI*

Telangana adopts resolution against delimitation

HYDERABAD, 27 MARCH

The Telangana Legislative Assembly on Thursday adopted a resolution asserting that population should not be the sole yardstick for the delimitation of Lok Sabha constituencies.

"The house expresses its deep concern on the manner in which the impending delimitation exercise is being planned, without transparent consultations with stakeholders," the resolution read.



Chief Minister A Revanth Reddy, who moved the resolution, claimed that there is a possibility of the representation of southern states in Lok Sabha seats falling from 24 per cent to 19 per cent if delimitation is carried out on a population basis.

Reddy alleged that the party in power at the Centre is trying to create a situation of making southern states irrelevant in formation of the Central government by reducing their representation in the Lok Sabha.

While continuing with the freeze on the number of parliamentary seats, taking state as a unit, redrawing the boundaries of parliamentary constituencies can be taken up, duly augmenting the SC and ST seats as per latest population and also providing reservation for women, it said.

Reddy appealed to the Chief Ministers of Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh, Kerala and Karnataka to attend the meeting of political parties and people's organisations to be organised by his government soon. *—PTI*

Stalin terms Yogi's remarks as 'political black comedy'

CHENNAI, 27 MARCH

Tamil Nadu Chief Minister MK Stalin on Thursday lashed out at his Uttar Pradesh counterpart Yogi Adityanath on the language row, dubbing his remarks as "political black comedy" and said his state was not opposing a language, but its "imposition and chauvinism".

He claimed Tamil Nadu's fair and firm voice on the two-language policy and fair delimitation "is echoing nationwide—and the BJP is clearly rattled."

"Yogi Adityanath wants to lecture us on hate? Spare us. This isn't irony—it's political black comedy at its darkest. We don't oppose any language; we oppose imposition and chauvinism," Stalin said on X.

"This isn't riot-for-votes politics. This is a battle for dignity and justice."

Stalin was reacting to Yogi's reported allegations that the DMK government was indulging in divisive tactics by using language issue.

Meanwhile, the Tamil Nadu Assembly passed a resolution against the Centre's proposed Waqf Amendment Bill 2024.

Stalin charged the provisions in the Amendment Bill amount to interference in religious affairs.

"This is against the freedom of religion. This is hurting Muslim sentiments," Stalin said.

"It amounts to interference in the religious affairs," he claimed. "The Assembly unanimously insists that the Union Government should completely withdraw the Waqf Amendment Bill." *—PTI*

Vaishnaw emphasised the need for societal safeguards PHOTO: ANI

Vaishnaw backs police action against Kamra

NEW DELHI, 27 MARCH

Union minister Ashwini Vaishnaw has defended the police summons issued to stand-up comedian Kunal Kamra for derogatory remarks made about Maharashtra Deputy Chief Minister Eknath Shinde. Speaking at the Times Now Summit, Vaishnaw stated that if legal requirements necessitated such action, it was justified. The comedian stirred controversy during a recent show in Mumbai, leading to a political backlash as Shinde's supporters vandalised the recording studio.

While reiterating the importance of free speech under the Constitution, Vaishnaw emphasised the need for societal safeguards. In a related development, Shiv Sena (UBT) chief Uddhav Thackeray criticised the Maharashtra government for summoning Kamra while remaining silent on actor Rahul Solapurkar's derogatory comments about Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj. Thackeray accused the BJP of hypocrisy regarding their engagement with Muslim voters, questioning the motives behind their 'Saugat-e-Modi' initiative, which distributes special kits for Eid. *—PTI*

CONG PROTEST IN ODISHA

Congress activists raise slogans during their demonstrations near the Assembly to press for formation of a House Committee to probe into alleged rise in crimes against women in the state, in Bhubaneswar, Odisha, on Thursday PHOTO: PTI

Two more groups cut ties with Hurriyat, says Shah

NEW DELHI, 27 MARCH

- Similarly, J&K Tehreek-I-Istiqaamat chairman Ghulam Nabi War echoed these sentiments, stating that the Hurriyat failed to meet the expectations of the people of Jammu and Kashmir

Union Home Minister Amit Shah announced on Thursday that two additional factions of the Jammu and Kashmir-based Hurriyat Conference have renounced separatism and expressed their commitment to the "new Bharat" envisioned by Prime Minister Narendra Modi. This revelation follows similar declarations from two other affiliates just days prior.

Amit Shah

On Tuesday, the Jammu and Kashmir People's Movement (JKPM) and the Jammu and Kashmir Democratic Political Movement (JKDPM) severed all ties with separatism. Shah stated, "Under the Modi government, separatism is breathing its last, and the triumph of unity is echoing across Kashmir."

The latest groups to disassociate from the Hurriyat are J&K Tehreek-Isteqlal and J&K Tehreek-I-Istiqaamat. In a statement, Tehreek-Isteqlal chairman Gulam Nabi Sofi declared his organisation's disassociation from the All Parties Hurriyat Conference and expressed commitment to the Indian Constitution. He affirmed, "I have long ago severed my ties with separatist ideology."

Similarly, J&K Tehreek-I-Istiqaamat chairman Ghulam Nabi War echoed these sentiments, stating that the Hurriyat had failed to meet the expectations of the people of Jammu and Kashmir. He also announced his official disconnection from separatism. *—PTI*

FEARS ON LARGEST DAM

Govt closely watching China's plans around Brahmaputra

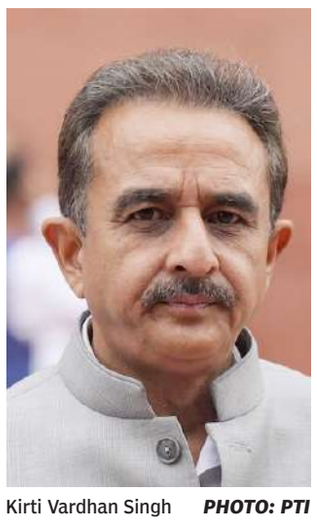
NEW DELHI, 27 MARCH

The government is "carefully" monitoring all developments relating to the Brahmaputra river, including plans by China to construct a hydropower project, and taking necessary measures to protect the country's interests, the Parliament was informed on Thursday.

In a written response to a query in Rajya Sabha, Minister of State for External Affairs Kirti Vardhan Singh also said the government of India "remains engaged" with China on the issue of trans-border rivers to "safeguard our interests".

He added "preventive and corrective measures" are being taken to safeguard life and livelihood of Indian citizens residing in downstream areas of Brahmaputra.

The Ministry of External Affairs was asked whether it



Kirti Vardhan Singh PHOTO: PTI

is a fact that China has "approved" the construction of a mega hydropower project on the Yarlung Tsangpo, despite concerns raised by India regarding its impact on downstream water flow and ecological stability.

The government "carefully monitors all developments relating to the Brahmaputra river, including plans by China to develop hydropower projects, and takes necessary measures to protect our interests, including preventive and corrective measures to safeguard life and livelihood of Indian citizens residing in downstream areas", he said.

"As a lower riparian state with considerable established user rights to the waters of the trans-border rivers, the government has consistently conveyed its views and concerns to the Chinese authorities, and has urged them to ensure that the interests of downstream states are not harmed by any activities in upstream areas," he said. *—PTI*

Advocates protest against the arrest of Shahi Jama Masjid President in Sambhal PHOTO: PTI

No interim bail for Sambhal masjid chief

SAMBHAL, 27 MARCH

A local court has denied an interim bail application from Zafar Ali, president of the Shahi Jama Masjid, amid serious allegations related to a violent protest last November. The Additional District Judge II, Nirbhay Narayan Rai, presided over the hearing on 27 March, dismissing the plea despite arguments from Ali's legal team. The prosecution cited grave charges, including inciting violence, assembling a mob, and damaging public property, emphasizing the need for a thorough investigation.

Ali was detained on 23 March after questioning linked to the unrest during a survey of the Mughal-era mosque, which is the subject of a contentious legal dispute asserting it stands on the site of an ancient Hindu temple. Following Ali's arrest, a Chandausi court also rejected his bail and ordered two days of judicial custody at Moradabad Jail. He faces multiple serious charges under the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita and the Prevention of Damage to Public Property Act. Ali has staunchly denied the allegations, claiming he is a victim of framing by the authorities.

A deeper inquiry into the violence, which resulted in four fatalities, has been mandated by the Uttar Pradesh government. *—PTI*

PHOTO: X

10 Kerala drug users test positive for HIV

MALAPPURAM, 27 MARCH

A routine screening by the state's AIDS Control Society has revealed that ten individuals in the Valanchery area of northern Kerala have tested HIV positive, all of whom are believed to be drug users. Dr. R Renuka, the District Medical Officer (DMO) of Malappuram, stated that the screening initially identified one HIV-positive individual. Tracing close contacts in the area led to the discovery of nine additional cases, including three migrant workers, all linked to the same group of drug users. It is suspected that the transmission occurred through a shared HIV-infected syringe. Authorities are now investigating whether there are more individuals at risk within this group. The DMO emphasised the importance of timely treatment. *—PTI*

4 spl needs children dead after meal at UP rehab

16 more sick in Lucknow centre; 1 suffers from seizures

LUCKNOW, 27 MARCH

Four special needs children died and at least 16 fell sick, allegedly after they had their dinner at a government rehabilitation centre in the state capital's Para area, officials said.

On Tuesday evening, more than 20 special needs children residing at the centre experienced sudden illness, possibly after food poisoning, and were taken to Lokbandhu hospital.

Lucknow District Magistrate Vishak G told PTI, "A total of four children including two girls and two boys of the shelter home aged between 12 and 17 years of age have died. Their bodies have been sent for post-mortem and their viscera will be preserved."

Dr Rajeev Kumar Dixit, Medical Superintendent of Lok Bandhu Raj Narayan Combined Hospital, told PTI Videos that around 20 children were brought to the hospital Tuesday evening from the rehabilitation centre.

Children from a government rehabilitation centre being treated at Lok Bandhu Raj Narayan Combined Hospital, in Uttar Pradesh **PHOTO: PTI**

"All these children are mentally challenged. They were severely dehydrated when they arrived. Despite our best efforts, two children died," he had earlier said.

Two more critically ill children, who were referred to another government hospital, succumbed, he said. The condition of the remaining 16 has improved, he added.

A medical team has been sent to the shelter home to observe the health of the remaining children.

"Around seven children were under medical observation at the shelter home. The health department team deputed at the shelter home is keeping an eye on the children there," the DM said. He has formed a committee to determine the cause of the alleged food poisoning.

Uttar Pradesh Deputy Chief Minister and Health Minister Brajesh Pathak visited Lokbandhu Hospital and said the children in stable condition. "One child is experiencing seizures but is out of danger," he said. Food samples have been sent for testing, once the test results are available, the next steps will be clearer, Pathak added.

According to District Probation Officer Vikas Singh, the centre houses 147 children, primarily orphans and those with mental challenges. *—PTI*

CASH ROW

CJI to consider request to halt Justice Varma's transfer

NEW DELHI, 27 MARCH

Yashwant Varma **PHOTO: PTI**

Chief Justice of India Sanjiv Khanna met leaders of various bar associations to discuss the proposed transfer of Delhi High Court's Justice Yashwant Varma to Allahabad High Court.

The CJI said he would consider their demands to withdraw the recommendation to transfer Justice Varma, who is embroiled in controversy after large sums of cash were reportedly found at his house on 14 March after a fire incident.

Representatives of the bar associations of the High Courts of Allahabad, Karnataka, Kerala, Gujarat, Jabalpur and Lucknow submitted a memorandum to the CJI's office and met CJI Khanna and other collegium members - Justices BR Gavai, Surya Kant, Abhay S Oka and Vikram Nath.

Urging the CJI to set the criminal law in motion in the matter, the memorandum claimed as per the report of the Chief Justice of the Delhi High Court, somebody had removed the articles from Justice Varma's residence a day after the fire incident.

"In these kinds of crimes, there would be involvement of others and non-registration (of an FIR) would adversely affect their prosecution," it said.

"CJI Khanna said he would to consider the demand for withdrawal of the collegium's recommendation to transfer Justice Varma," Allahabad High Court Bar Association president Anil Tiwari said after the meeting. *—PTI*

Rajasthan infant dies after falling into boiling milk

JAIPUR, 27 MARCH

A three-year-old girl tragically succumbed to her burn injuries after inadvertently falling into a pot of boiling milk at her home in Deeg district, police reported on Thursday. The girl, Sarika, passed away on Wednesday night. The incident occurred on Tuesday evening when Sarika spotted a cat on the roof and panicked, causing her to collide with a vessel of hot milk kept near the stove and tumbled in it, according to her grandfather, Harinarayan. Sarika's family resides in Agma colony in Kaman town, while her father serves in the Army and is stationed in Jammu. Initially, she was taken to a government hospital, before being transferred to two different hospitals as her condition worsened. *—PTI*

UP girl abducted and gang raped in graveyard

GHAZIABAD, 27 MARCH

In a troubling incident in the Niwari area of Modinagar, a 17-year-old girl was reportedly kidnapped and raped by two men, one of whom was known to her. The alleged abduction occurred on Monday afternoon when one of the suspects lured the girl to a water tank before forcing her onto a motorcycle and taking her to a nearby graveyard. There, one accused assaulted her while the other stood guard. After her screams for help, the attackers covered her mouth with a cloth and physically assaulted her. Following the incident, the victim confided in her parents, who promptly took her to Niwari Police Station to file a complaint. Authorities have registered a case against the two suspects, identified as Israel and Ashraf, who remains at large. *—PTI*

UP man weds wife to her lover, cites Meerut murder

SANT KABIR NAGAR, 27 MARCH

A man arranged his wife's marriage to her lover, citing concerns for his own safety after he learnt about the recent murder in Meerut of a husband allegedly by his wife and her lover. Bablu, who works as a labourer facilitated the marriage of his wife Radhika to Vishal Kumar on Monday. The married in 2017 and have two children. According to locals, Radhika had been involved in a relationship with Vishal, also from the same village, for the past year-and-a-half. When Bablu discovered the affair, he asked Radhika to end it, but she refused. Instead of escalating the situation, Bablu decided to arrange the marriage. "I decided to arrange their marriage to avoid potential harm to myself. In recent days, we have seen that husbands have been killed by their wives," Bablu told PTI. *—PTI*

PHOTO: PTI

Attempting suicide is cruelty, grounds for divorce: HC

MUMBAI, 27 MARCH

- The husband claimed that threatening suicide amounts to cruelty under the Hindu Marriage Act

A spouse threatening or attempting to commit suicide amounts to 'cruelty' and is a valid ground for divorce, the Bombay High Court said.

Justice RM Joshi of the high court's Aurangabad bench in the order last month upheld the decree passed by a family court dissolving a couple's marriage. The woman had moved the HC challenging the family court order.

The man had alleged his wife threatened to send him and his family to jail by committing suicide, and even made an attempt once. This amounts to cruelty under provisions of the Hindu Marriage Act, he said. He further said that his wife said she would file false complaints against him and his family and send them to jail.

"Such an act on the part of the spouse would amount to such a cruelty that it becomes a ground for decree of divorce," the HC said, upholding the divorce granted by the family court .

The woman, in her plea, said she as abused by her husband and his father and hence left to return to her parent's home in 2010. She denied having caused any cruelty to her husband. The couple married in 2009 and have a daughter. *—PTI*

SC orders compensation for illegal occupation of Delhi monument

NEW DELHI, 27 MARCH

PHOTO: NMMA.NIC.IN

The Supreme Court has mandated the Defence Colony Resident Welfare Association (RWA) to pay Rs 40 lakh in compensation for its unauthorised occupation of the Gumti of Shaikh Ali, a monument dating back to the Lodhi era, for over six decades. The bench, comprising Justices Sudhanshu Dhulia and Ahsanuddin Amanullah, declined to waive the fee and scheduled a follow-up hearing for 8 April.

The court instructed the RWA to compensate the Delhi government's archaeology department, responsible for monument conservation.

Previously, the court had requested the RWA to clarify the costs related to its occupation and ordered the archaeology department to form a committee for restoration efforts.

The case arose from a petition by Rajiv Suri, a local resident, who sought to have the structure declared a protected monument under the Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Sites and Remains Act of 1958. The RWA had occupied the site since the 1960s, justifying its presence by citing potential vandalism.

During proceedings, the court expressed dismay over the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) for failing to safeguard the site, leading to a directive for the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) to investigate the circumstances surrounding the RWA's occupation and any modifications made to the structure. *—PTI*

SC adjourns bail hearing in Elgar Parishad case

NEW DELHI, 27 MARCH

The Supreme Court has postponed the hearing on the bail applications of advocate Surendra Gadling and activist Jyoti Jagtap, who were arrested in connection with the Elgar Parishad-Maoist links case, for two weeks.

Gadling is accused of aiding Maoists and providing them sensitive government information and maps. He reportedly incited opposition to the Surjagarh mines operation and urged locals to join the Maoist movement. while Jagtap, linked to the Kabir Kala Manch (KKM), is alleged to have delivered speeches inciting terrorism *—PTI*

WB BJP MP's home attacked with guns, bombs

KOLKATA, 27 MARCH

Arjun Singh **PHOTO: PTI**

Unidentified assailants launched an attack involving bombs and gunfire outside the residence of BJP leader and former MP Arjun Singh on Wednesday night in Bhatpara, West Bengal. One young man sustained injuries during the incident, which has been attributed to a dispute between rival groups at the nearby Meghna Jute Mill.

Following the attack, Singh and his associates pursued the attackers, compelling them to flee. Barrackpore Police Commissioner Ajay Thakur stated, "The situation is now under control. Those involved will not be spared.."

Singh accused Namit Singh, the son of Trinamool Congress (TMC) councillor Sunita Singh, of orchestrating the violence, claiming that gunfire occurred in front of police amidst the conflict. In contrast, TMC's Jagaddal MLA Somnath Shyam charged that it was Singh who instigated the violence, demanding his immediate arrest.

The incident escalated quickly, leading to the deployment of a large police force, including the Rapid Action Force (RAF).

Following the attack, the wounded youth was taken to Bhatpara State General Hospital and later relocated to a Kolkata facility as his condition worsened. *—PTI*

IIT prof charged for researcher's death at Gujarat excavation site

AHMEDABAD, 27 MARCH

PHOTO: X

Police have filed a case against a professor from IIT Delhi for alleged negligence leading to the death of a PhD student last year during excavation work at the archaeological site of Lothal, Gujarat. The incident occurred on 27 November, when 23-year-old Surabhi Verma tragically lost her life after a 10-foot excavation pit collapsed while she and her professor, **Yama Dixi**t, were inside collecting soil samples for a paleoclimatic study.

The FIR was lodged on 23 March, following a complaint by Verma's father, Ramkhelavan Verma. While Verma was pronounced dead at the scene, Dixit sustained a head injury and was rescued from the collapsed pit. He has been charged under Sections 106 and 125 of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita, which pertain to causing death by negligence and endangering the safety of others.

According to the FIR, Verma had enrolled in the PhD programme at IIT Delhi in December 2023 after completing an MTech in Earth Sciences. The research team reportedly did not inform local authorities or the police prior to commencing their excavation, and a preliminary investigation revealed they were unaware of the high water table beneath the surface soil at the site. *—PTI*

FORGERY SUSPECT MAKES BAIL BY FORGING JUDGE'S SIGNATURE

PUNE, 27 MARCH

PHOTO: FREEPIK

- The man forged a fake court order granting himself bail for insufficient evidence

A man accused of forgery and copyright violation has allegedly used a fake court order with a forged signature to secure bail from the Bombay High Court. Haribhau Chemte, who is currently on the run, was granted anticipatory bail in January after submitting the fraudulent document.

Chemte, who previously worked in the quality control department at CTR Manufacturing Pvt Ltd, is accused of stealing patented designs. The Vimantal police in Pune registered a case against him in 2022.

According to police, Chemte created a fake court order under Section 169 of the CrPC, which allows for the release of an accused if there is insufficient evidence. He submitted the forged document to the Bombay High Court, securing bail on 17 January.

However, the complainant raised suspicions about the order, prompting the high court to vacate the bail and initiate an inquiry. A fresh case has been registered against Chemte under various sections, including forgery of public records and documents, possessing a forged document, and cheating.

The incident has raised concerns about the vulnerability of the judicial system to fraud. The police are currently searching for Chemte, who remains at large. *—PTI*

'GOOD HEALTH SYSTEM'

UN lauds India's progress in child mortality

UNITED NATIONS, 27 MARCH

The reported highlighted that since 2000, India had reduced under-five mortality by 70 per cent **PHOTO: UNSPLASH**

India's efforts and progress in reducing preventable child deaths has been lauded as "exemplar" by the United Nations.

The United Nations Interagency Group for Child Mortality Estimation report, released Tuesday, cited the example of five "exemplar countries" in achieving child mortality reduction -- India, Nepal, Senegal, Ghana and Burundi. It said that despite differing geographies, economic conditions and health system structures, the countries all addressed child mortality through "strong governance, strategic investments in health and scale-up of evidence-based health interventions".

"Common throughout these success stories are strengthened health systems that prioritise universal access and community-based care, data-driven decision making, expanded immunisation and maternal and newborn health programmes, and innovative health financing models," the report said.

On India, the report said the country has made gains through health system investment.

The report highlighted that since 2000, India achieved an under-five mortality reduction of 70 per cent and a neonatal mortality reduction of 61 per cent, "driven by overlapping measures to increase health coverage, enhance available interventions and develop health infrastructure and human resources".

It noted that every pregnant woman is entitled to free delivery (including caesarean section), and infant care provides free transport, medications, diagnostics and dietary support in public health institutions, under the Ayushman Bharat scheme.

"India has also prioritised the training and deployment of skilled birth attendants, such as midwives and community health workers, to provide appropriate maternal and child health services," it said. *—PTI*

Students in 'dummy schools' can't take CBSE board exams

NEW DELHI, 27 MARCH

PHOTO: PIXABAY

The Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE) has announced that students who do not attend regular school will not be permitted to sit for their Class 12 board examinations.

This decision is part of the board's efforts to crack down on "dummy schools" where students enroll solely to appear for board exams without attending classes.

According to CBSE officials, students must have a minimum of 75 per cent attendance to be eligible for the board exams.

Those who fail to meet this requirement may be barred from taking the exam. Instead, they will have to take the National Institute of Open Schooling (NIOS) test.

The CBSE is also considering taking disciplinary action against schools that promote this "dummy" culture or sponsor non-attending students. This move aims to prevent students from bypassing regular attendance and focusing solely on exam preparation.

Many students opt for dummy schools to focus on preparing for competitive engineering and medical entrance exams.

However, the CBSE's decision aims to put an end to this practice and ensure that students attend regular school to receive a well-rounded education. *—PTI*

CODE RED

A protester lights a flare during a rally against the passing of a controversial revision of a military law that will allow military officers to serve in more government posts without resigning from the armed forces, outside the parliament in Jakarta, Indonesia
PHOTO: PTI

EU is preparing for a disaster - but why?

The EU bloc told governments to roll out measures to ensure citizens are prepared for disasters, both climate driven, or otherwise
PHOTO: FREEPIK

Do you have enough supplies stored to get you through the first 72 hours of a nationwide emergency? Food, water, cash, medicine, ID documents, a flashlight and a radio that can receive longwave frequencies are just some of the items that should be on a survival-kit checklist, according to the European Union.

On Wednesday the bloc told national governments to roll out measures to ensure citizens and services like schools and hospitals are better prepared to deal with possible future crises, ranging anywhere from wildfires to industrial accidents, or even armed conflict.

The new strategy comes after EU-commissioned research last year pointed to gaps in countries' disaster response plans and a fragmented approach across the bloc. Brussels now aims to harmonize protocols and spur on more actions in member states.

"You need to know how to act — how to react — if the power goes off, if there's an earthquake, if there is a massive flood, or there's any type of threat. How do you protect yourself? What resources do you need? How do you yourself take responsibility?" Roxana Minzatu, EU commissioner for preparedness, told reporters in Brussels.

"It's about us exiting a reactive, responsive mindset towards potential risks and hazards and entering into an approach, into a mindset, that is about forecasting, about anticipating risks, about prevention," she said.

The plan laid out by the EU's executive arm on Wednesday suggests national authorities introduce or beef up alert systems, adapt school curricula and roll out training programs to keep citizens in the know on the risks they face.

The bloc also plans to open a new centralized "crisis coordination hub" and boost existing shared EU stockpiles of goods like vaccines, transport equipment, and critical gear to counter chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear threats.

The EU's executive says preparedness will mean different things in different countries. Wildfires are more common in Spain and Greece, for example, while earthquakes are more likely to occur in Romania and Bulgaria.

Germany has released a 68-page document detailing what civilians should do in case of floods, fires or nuclear emergencies, including recommendations to stockpile 10 days' worth of food and other essential supplies.

"It's up to member states to define the message based on the position they're in," EU Crisis Management Commissioner Hadja Lahbib said on Wednesday.

An EU official said Wednesday that threats to the EU and its security are rising, with geopolitical tensions in the bloc's neighborhood — such as Russia's war in Ukraine — having brought security to the forefront of a rising number of citizens' minds.

"I wouldn't say that we have an acute threat of a military attack, but of course, we consider Russia to be much more of a concrete threat than we used to," researcher Hakala said.

"Most countries in Europe nowadays actually recognise climate risks," the expert added. "That's because they have been significant with all kinds of flooding and torrential rain and storms around Europe."

Hakala also pointed out that so-called hybrid threats, such as cyberattacks on hospitals, which can paralyze public health infrastructure, are also becoming "more recognized and more concrete."

The EU's Hadja Lahbib pushed back on accusations the bloc was spreading unnecessary fear on Wednesday.

"Being aware of risks and preparing for them is the opposite of creating panic and irrational actions like we may have seen during the Covid-19 pandemic. Don't forget, we saw people thronging into the shops buying toilet paper," she said.

But Hakala admitted that striking a balance between fostering greater understanding and keeping cool heads was not always easy.

"You need citizens to be aware of potential threats and to prepare for them," she said. "But at the same time, it's not good if you become overly scared of everything. Especially nowadays, when you have so much potential for disinformation in social media." *—DW News*

LETTERS write to us at salarenglishdigital@gmail.com

SALAR ساڈھ

Signal leak will damage US international relations

Plans for an attack against an enemy target are classified in America. But the private views of high-ranking officials about allies, communicated within government, must also count as intelligence to be protected.

The recent communication of this category of information over the Signal messaging app has been dismissed by the US president, Donald Trump as a mere "glitch". It is definitely that. But it also raises the prospect that in his first two months of office, key parts of the administration might have inadvertently been leaving sensitive information vulnerable to enemy interception. That would be one of the most serious intelligence breaches in modern history.

National security advisor, Mike Waltz, has subsequently "taken responsibility" for the episode – but, so far at least, remains in post.

Instead, the administration has decided to launch bitter ad hominem attacks against the journalist that revealed this breach of security, the editor-in-chief of The Atlantic, Jeffrey Goldberg.

Trump called Goldberg a "total sleazebag", defense secretary Pete Hegseth referred to him as "deceitful and highly discredited". Walz called him "the bottom scum of journalists".

The recent chat group reported exchange involved the adminstration's most senior national security officials: Waltz, Hegseth, Vice-President JD Vance, secretary of state Marco Rubio and director of national intelligence Tulsi Gabbard, among others.

As we know now, it also, accidentally, included Goldberg, himself a storied national security reporter before he took up the editorship of the Atlantic. It's a national security blunder almost without parallel.

If an inquiry is set up, it will be interesting to see whether these messages are treated as federal records. This would be signficant because the messages would need to be handed over to officials to classify and archive as part of the public record. That would certainly clear up whether this was indeed a "glitch" or whether classified information was indeed shared – something the administration still denies.

For such an elevated group of US government officials to use a consumer messaging app to talk business invites an easy win for enemy intelligence agencies. America's key intelligence competitors invest billions of dollars in techniques and technologies to break the toughest encryption. For phone-based communications, we know that apps such as NSO Group's Pegasus can be used to bypass the encryption on phones.

The Guardian newspaper's investigative work has highlighted how journalists and activists were targeted by countries using this technology and the interception capability of capable intelligence nations is far stronger. So the standard security induction to officials would cover communications, devices and protocols.

It is not clear whether the protocols cover the use of emojis. Waltz's use of a fist, fire and flag emoji is certainly unusual in diplomatic cables that have been aired publicly.

Even worse, the communication between these officials was prior to a deployment of US military assets against an enemy target, the Houthi rebels in Yemen. This potentially placed the success of the operation and those assets at risk.

That the Yemenis did not move assets that had been targeted does not conclusively prove that the communications remained safe. It has long been a practice to pick and choose when to risk revealing that communications are being intercepted.

The US has recent form in vigorously pursuing journalists who publish classified materials. The Edward Snowden leaks caused considerable damage to transatlantic intelligence and Snowden was forced to take up residence in Moscow to avoid prosecution.

The newspapers who published his papers were subject to strong action from the governments in their countries. The publication of Chelsea Manning's leaked cables – known as Cablegate – by Julian Assange and Wikileaks resulted in a lengthy process to try and prosecute Assange.

What the Signal messages reveal is a contempt for European allies. That will be difficult to repair. Describing allies who have lost thousands of soldiers supporting American foreign policy aims as "pathetic" and "freeloaders" will make it very difficult for those governments to underplay the significance of the comments.

What we have seen in the Signal messages might herald a new era of diplomacy. *—The Conversation*

The Signal leak under US President Donal Trump is one of the most serious security lapses ***PHOTO: PTI***

How the market slump is affecting small investors in India

It was FOMO, or Fear of Missing Out, that got Kanishk* to start investing in the stock market.

He told DW that as India battled the second wave of Covid-19 in 2021, he started noticing ads on Instagram featuring social media influencers giving money-making tips.

"I didn't want to miss out on this — the way people were making money. That, I would say, is the first thing that got me into the market," Kanishk said.

He explained how, after initially investing in mutual funds, he gradually moved to trading on the stock market.

Like a lot of amateur investors, he had no clue about the fundamentals of investing, he said, but he kept up with the market trends, "especially on Reddit," the US-based social media platform.

And in the beginning, "everything was great."

Saloni Puj* and Ishan Shah shared similar stories to Kanishk's.

Both Puj, a media professional from Kolkata, the capital of the state of West Bengal, and Shah, who runs a cultural center that teaches art and music in the western city of Ahmedabad, also started trading in the stock market sometime during the pandemic lockdown.

"The market was doing so well it felt anyone who was making any money was making it in the markets," Shah said, who added that he bought random stocks, sometimes based on the recommendations of others. "Weirdly, whatever I did, I kept making money."

Puj took a more guarded approach. "I knew that the market [was] in a euphoria stage, I was very aware of the bubble that was happening," she said.

Then came September 2024 and all three were hit hard when the bubble burst. After months of rallying, the market eventually corrected, followed by a months long slump.

For most Indians who started trading on the stock markets, the rally after the pandemic slump was a great time.

During the lockdown, a lot of people had more time and disposable income, and many were influenced by the idea of making some quick and easy money.

"During COVID, people had surplus cash, and a large number of young investors entered the capital markets as retail investors," said Sagun Agrawal, a derivatives trader in the Indian capital markets and a financial literacy advocate for women. "This was positive for the markets as it boosted liquidity and created investable funds for capital formation."

Indian equities lost more that $1.2 trillion in value since September 2024 ***PHOTO: ANI***

Online trading has become more popular thanks to new companies offering low brokerage fees and easy access to credit. One such option is Margin Trading Facility (MTF), which lets traders buy shares by paying only part of the cost upfront. The brokerage covers the rest as a loan, with interest.

National Stock Exchange (NSE) data showed that between March 2020 and March 2024, the number of registered investors in India almost tripled to 92 million.

India's NIFTY 50 stock market index went from about 8,000 points in March 2020 to record levels of more than 26,000 points in September 2024. For the retail investors caught up in the euphoria, it felt like nothing could go wrong — until it did.

In the months since September last year, Indian equities have lost more than $1.2 trillion in value. In February, the NIFTY 50 benchmark index was down 16 per cent from its peak, and on its longest losing streak since 1996. It was the worst performing global market.

Small retail investors were among the worst hit.

"Many of these [retail] investors were uninformed and chased hyped-up securities, leading to froth in the market. As corrections took place over the last six months, these investors faced major financial setbacks," said Agrawal.

Bijoy Peter, a senior partner at Bangalore-based Germinate Investor Services, said one of the reasons for the market correction was the disparity between the soaring valuations of corporate India and their declining earnings. India's GDP growth had also slowed to 5.4 per cent in the July-September 2024 quarter, he said.

He also pointed to a lack of government spending in infrastructure and other sectors at the time, as well as other global factors.

Foreign Institutional Investors (FIIs) started pulling their money out of India. China started implementing significant stimulus measures in its market, which contributed to money moving there, he said.

This movement of money out of India had a huge impact.

"When such a large sum moves out, the effect is massive because investors have to sell their holdings. Selling at that magnitude has a huge impact on stock prices," Peter said. "As a result, the market began to fall."

Peter added that a lot of positive developments initiated by the government had been overlooked by the market — including an increase in tax limits, measures taken by the Reserve Bank of India to inject liquidity into the banking system, as well as the announcement of increased infrastructure spending.

Agrawal also noted that last September, the real sellers were Indian High-Net-Worth Individuals (HNIs) and high-value investors. They sensed that the market was overvalued and had limited scope for further upside, she said.

"The major investors pulled their money out of the market, causing the decline, while smaller investors were left to bear the losses," one trader, told DW.

While Indian markets have been navigating stormy waters over the last five months, some said the situation was starting to look up with the stock market experiencing significant gains last week.

However, investors remained cautious amid US President Donald Trump's threats to impose reciprocal tariffs on India from 2 April. *—DW News*

German, Austrian ministers drop planned Syria trip

BERLIN, 27 MARCH

The German and Austrian interior ministers cancelled a planned trip to Syria on Thursday because of a possible threat to their delegation, German authorities said. Germany's Nancy Faeser had planned to visit Damascus with Austrian counterpart Gerhard Karner and a German military plane was supposed to fly Faeser's delegation into Syria from Jordan on Thursday morning. But her ministry said that the trip was broken off before the flight could depart from Amman "because of concrete warnings by German security authorities of a terrorist threat," German news agency dpa reported. It added that a threat to the delegation couldn't be ruled out and that it wouldn't have been responsible to travel in view of that possible threat. *—PTI*

Islamic militants kill 12 Cameroonian soldiers in ambush

YAOUNDE, 27 MARCH

At least 12 Cameroonian soldiers were killed Monday night in an ambush by Islamic militants on the border with Nigeria, according to a statement from the Cameroonian Ministry of Defence. The attack that occurred in the Lake Chad area near the town of Wulgo also left over a dozen soldiers wounded, the ministry said on Thursday. Officials said the attack was suspected to have been carried out by extremists from the Boko Haram group or its breakaway faction that is loyal to the Islamic State (IS) group. Pointing to Boko Haram militants, the ministry cited the "advanced weaponry they increasingly have at their disposal" and the "apparent alliance with powerful transnational criminal entities" as contributing factors to Monday's attack. *—PTI*

Six Russians killed in Egyptian submarine disaster

CAIRO, 27 MARCH

A tourist submarine carrying 45 Russian passengers, including minors, sank off the Egyptian coast on Thursday, resulting in six fatalities and nine injuries. The vessel, operated by Sindbad Submarines, was on a coral reef tour in the Red Sea resort of Hurghada. Emergency crews rescued 29 people, who were taken to hospital and are in a stable condition. The cause of the sinking remains unclear. This incident raises concerns about safety standards in Egypt's tourism industry, particularly in the Red Sea region. In November, a tourist yacht sank in the Red Sea after warnings of rough waters, resulting in at least four deaths and 33 rescues. *—PTI*

PHOTO: X

Georgia Rep asks UK scribe to go home in Signal chat row

NEW YORK, 27 MARCH

Georgia representative Marjorie Taylor Greene sparked outrage when she told a British journalist to "go back to your country" during a press conference. The UK's Sky News journalist was questioning Greene about a leaked Signal group chat between US officials discussing a planned military strike on Yemen. Greene responded aggressively, saying, "We don't give a crap about your opinion and your reporting. Why don't you go back to your country where you have a major migrant problem?" She implied the journalist should focus on issues in UK. The Signal controversy centres on top US security officials using a publicly available messaging app to discuss sensitive attack plans. President Trump downplayed the leak, claiming the chat was "not classified". *—PTI*

Police use force to quell students' stir in Istanbul

Protesters call mayor's arrest a politically motivated act

ISTANBUL, 27 MARCH

Protesters raise slogans during an agitation after Istanbul's Mayor Ekrem Imamoglu was arrested and sent to prison on Tuesday **PHOTO: PTI**

Police used pepper spray, plastic pellets and water cannon against protesters in Turkiye's capital on Thursday morning, potentially reigniting tensions after two days of relative calm in the country's biggest anti-government protests in over a decade.

The demonstrations began last week following the arrest of Istanbul Mayor Ekrem Imamoglu, a key rival to President Recep Tayyip Erdogan. Imamoglu, who has been jailed on corruption charges that many see as politically motivated, is also accused of supporting terrorism.

The government insists the judiciary is independent, but critics say the evidence is based on secret witnesses and lacks credibility.

On Thursday morning, student demonstrators tried to march and gathered to read a statement near the gates at Middle East Technical University, pro-opposition broadcaster Halk TV and local media reported. They were met by security forces, used deployed pepper spray, water cannon and plastic pellets to disperse the gathering. A standoff ensued, where the students hid behind a barricade of dumpsters until the police charged to detain them.

Melih Meric, a legislator with the Republican People's Party or CHP, was seen soaked with water and suffering from pepper spray exposure. "My student friends only wanted to make a press statement, but the police strictly did not allow it, this is the result," Meric said in social media videos. Officials have not said how many people were detained.

Ozgur Ozel, the leader of party to which Imamoglu belongs, had promised that lawmakers would stand alongside protesters in the hope of lowering tensions. He also warned on Tuesday that if the police provoked demonstrators again, he would "make a call for 500,000 people to (come to) the place that will disturb" the authorities the most.*—PTI*

President Donald Trump speaks to reporters in the Oval Office at the White House on Wednesday **PHOTO: PTI**

Trump puts 25% tariff on vehicles

WASHINGTON, 27 MARCH

US President Donald Trump on Wednesday said he was placing 25 per cent tariffs on auto imports, a move the White House claims would foster domestic manufacturing but could also put a financial squeeze on automakers that depend on global supply chains.

"This will continue to spur growth. We'll effectively be charging a 25 per cent tariff," Trump said, adding, "This is permanent."

The tariffs, which the White House expects to raise USD 100B in revenue annually, could be complicated as even US automakers source their components from around the world.

The tax hike starting April means automakers could face higher costs and lower sales, though Trump argues that the tariffs will lead to more factories opening in the US and the end of what he judges to be a "ridiculous" supply chain in which auto parts and finished vehicles are manufactured across the US, Canada and Mexico.

General Motors shares fell roughly 3 per cent on Wednesday's trading. Ford's stock was up slightly. Stellantis, the owner of Jeep and Chrysler, dropped nearly 3.6 per cent.

Trump has long said that tariffs against auto imports would be a defining policy of his presidency, betting that the costs created by the taxes would cause more production to relocate to the US, while helping narrow the budget deficit.

But US and foreign automakers have plants around the world to accommodate global sales while maintaining competitive prices – and it could take years for companies to design, build and open the new factories that Trump is promising. *—PTI*

US may ease China tariffs for TikTok deal

Donald Trump has said he would be willing to reduce tariffs on China to get a deal done with TikTok's Chinese parent company ByteDance to sell the social media app used by 170 million Americans. He acknowledged the role China would play in any agreement. ByteDance has a 5 April deadline to find a non-Chinese buyer for TikTok or face a US ban on national security grounds that was supposed to have taken effect in January under a 2024 law.

Russia, Ukraine trade barbs over strikes

Firefighters put out the flames after a Russian attack in Kharkiv, Ukraine, on Thursday **PHOTO: PTI**

KYIV, 27 MARCH

Russia and Ukraine have accused each other of breaking the terms of a US-brokered deal to pause strikes on energy infrastructure, underscoring the challenges to negotiating a broader peace in the war in Ukraine.

Russia's defence ministry alleged that Ukrainian drone attacks hit an electric facility in the Bryansk region on Wednesday morning and a power grid facility in the Kursk region on Tuesday, leading to a power cut affecting thousands of people.

It said the Ukrainian government "is doing everything to derail the Russian–US agreements on the gradual settlement" of the war.

Ukraine's General Staff denied the allegations, saying in a statement on Wednesday that Russia's claims were part of a broader disinformation campaign aimed at justifying continued hostilities.

"They've been hitting our energy sites with bombs, attack drones and FPV drones," Zelenskyy's communications advisor Dmytro Lytvyn said on X. "There have already been eight confirmed hits on energy facilities. Every night our air defence forces shoot down nearly a hundred attack drones. Many of those drones were likely targeting other energy facilities."

The accusations came hours after Washington announced a tentative agreement with Ukraine and Russia to pause attacks on energy sites and ensure safe shipping in the Black Sea. *—PTI*

N Korea gives Russia 3,000 more troopers

SEOUL, 27 MARCH

North Korea sent around 3,000 additional troopers to Russia in January and February in continued support for Russian President Vladimir Putin's war on Ukraine, South Korea's military said on Thursday in its latest assessment.

The South's Joint Chiefs of Staff said North Korea has also been sending more missiles, artillery equipment and ammunition to Russia and could increase supplies further depending on the war situation. Russia and Ukraine recently agreed on a limited ceasefire, though both sides have accused each other of violations.

The military equipment North Korea has sent to Russia includes a "considerable amount" of short-range ballistic missiles, 170mm self-propelled howitzers and around 220 units of 240mm multiple rocket launchers.

North Korea has sent approximately 11,000 military personnel to fight in the war against Ukraine in since the 1950–53 Korean War.

Meanwhile, North Korean leader Kim Jong Un observed tests of newly developed reconnaissance and attack drones this week and called for their increased production, state media said on Thursday. Kim has been emphasising the development of drones, and the tests were the latest display of his country's growing military capabilities.

Photos released by North Korea's official Korean Central News Agency showed Kim observing what appeared to be a large reconnaissance drone roughly resembling Boeing's E-7 Wedgetail airborne warning and control aircraft. *—PTI*

France, China to discuss Ukraine, trade

BEIJING, 27 MARCH

French Foreign Minister Jean-Noel Barrot began a two-day visit to China on Thursday during which he is to hold talks with his Chinese counterpart on Ukraine and longstanding trade disputes between China and Europe.

Barrot met Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi on Thursday. On Friday, he will meet local officials and business leaders in Shanghai.

Barrot's visit is an opportunity to gauge China's policy on Ukraine ahead of a major French-hosted meeting on a possible peacekeeping force for the country. *—PTI*

Putin will die soon, says Zelenskyy

PARIS, 27 MARCH

Russian President Vladimir Putin "will die soon," said Ukrainian leader Volodymyr Zelenskyy on Wednesday, adding that it will end the war between their countries, reported The Kyiv Independent. Zelenskyy made the remark during an interview with European journalists on in Paris on Wednesday. It remark comes amid persistent rumours about Putin's health. "It is very important that America does not help Putin to get out of this global isolation now," Zelenskyy said in Paris. "I believe that this is dangerous. This is one of the most dangerous moments." Putin hopes to "remain in power until his death", Zelenskyy said. *—Agencies*

Hamas man among 7 killed in Gaza Strip

DEIR AL-BALAH, 27 MARCH

Israeli strikes overnight and into Thursday killed a family of six and a Hamas spokesman in the Gaza Strip. A missile hit the tent where Abdel-Latif al-Qanoua was staying in the Jabaliya area of northern Gaza, killing him, said Basem Naim, another Hamas official.

Another strike near Gaza City killed four children and their parents, said the emergency service of Gaza's Health Ministry.

Israel ended its ceasefire with Hamas last week, launching a surprise wave of strikes that killed hundreds of Palestinians.

It has vowed to escalate the offensive if Hamas does not release hostages, disarm and leave the territory. *—PTI*

Palestinians walk amid the destruction caused by the Israeli air and ground offensive at Al-Shati camp in Gaza City **PHOTO: PTI**

Gunmen kill 6 in Pak's restive Balochistan

ISLAMABAD, 27 MARCH

PHOTO: X

Unidentified gunmen shot dead five people from Punjab after offloading them from a passenger bus in Pakistan's restive Balochistan province, media reports said on Thursday.

Another passenger who was injured in the attack succumbed to his injuries later.

The attack occurred in the Gwadar district of the province when armed men killed five passengers of a bus in the Kalmat area, Geo News reported, quoting Deputy Commissioner Hamoodur Rehman.

The Dawn reported that the armed men killed the passengers after checking their ID cards and also took away three others. It said they belonged to the Punjab province.

No group claimed responsibility for the attack, but in the past, ethnic Baloch terrorist groups carried out such targeted attacks against the people of Punjab.

Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif condemned the attack and directed authorities to investigate and prosecute those responsible. "Terrorists are the enemies of the country's development and prosperity of Balochistan," said President Asif Ali Zardari, according to the report.

Balochistan Chief Minister Sarfraz Bugti posted on X, "Offloading innocent passengers from a bus and murdering them based on their identity is a heinous and cowardly act." *—PTI*

CARBON LEVY

Pakistanis face more taxes after IMF deal

ISLAMABAD, 27 MARCH

The people of Pakistan should brace for more taxes as carbon levy is on the cards following a fresh deal of USD 1.3B with the International Monetary Fund (IMF) to tackle climate change, officials said.

Under the Staff-Level Agreement (SLA) with the IMF on Wednesday, the lender also agreed to release the second tranche of about USD 1B under the already agreed USD 7B loan. "The IMF team has reached a SLA with the Pakistani autho¬rities on the first review of the 37-month Extended Arrangement under the Extended Fund Facility, and on a new 28-month arrangement under the IMF's Resilience and Sustainability Facility (RSF) with total access over the 28 months of around USD 1.3B," the Fund said in a statement.

Under the Staff-Level Agreement signed on Wednesday, the IMF has agreed to release the second tranche of about USD 1B under the already agreed USD 7B loan **PHOTO: REPRESENTATIONAL IMAGE**

With the latest RSF arrangement, the combined volume of IMF loan rises to about USD 8.3B and approval by the IMF's Executive Board, the country would have immediate access to about USD 2B, which would help to shore up its balance of payment.

But the largesse by the lender comes with a price age for the already tax-burdened masses, as the government agreed to introduce a new carbon levy, increase water pricing, and open up the automobile sector to global trade, reported Dawn.

- The only silver lining for the common people is the expected reduction in the power rate, but that is not free either, as the fund allowed the government to divert the already introduced petroleum levy to reduce power tariffs

The only silver lining for the common people is the expected reduction in the power rate, but that is not free either, as the fund allowed the government to divert the already introduced petroleum levy to reduce power tariffs. *—PTI*

Trump's 25% tariff knocks down automobile stocks

Tata Motor falls by 5.4%, Mahindra sees 8% tumble

Trump on Wednesday announced imposition of 25 per cent tariffs on auto imports **PHOTO: X**

NEW DELHI, 27 MARCH

Auto stocks declined in morning trade on Thursday, with Tata Motors tumbling over 6 per cent, after the US President Donald Trump announced imposition of 25 per cent tariffs on auto imports from April. Shares of Tata Motors tanked 5.47 per cent to Rs 669.35 on the BSE.

Ashok Leyland dropped 5.73 per cent, Mahindra & Mahindra dipped 8.25 per cent, Bajaj Auto slipped 0.21 per cent Apollo Tyres skidded 0.81 per cent. The BSE auto index quoted 0.99 per cent lower at 48,220.85. Among auto components and equipment firms Samvardhana Motherson International slumped 7.59 per cent, Sona BLW Precision Forgings tanked 6.69 per cent, Bharat Forge declined 4.28 per cent and ASK Automotive Ltd went lower by 1.82 per cent.

"Trump's latest decision to impose a 25 per cent duty on all car imports to the US will impact Tata Motors which exports a significant chunk of JLR cars to the US," VK Vijayakumar, Chief Investment Strategist, Geojit Investments Limited, said.

Trump on Wednesday announced imposition of 25 per cent tariffs on auto imports from April with another 25 per cent tariffs expected to be applied on imports of major automotive parts -- engines and engine parts, transmissions and powertrain parts, and electrical components by May. *—PTI*

Tariffs to have minimal impact on auto sector: GTRI

NEW DELHI, 27 MARCH

The implications of the US announcement to impose 25 per cent import duty on completely built vehicles and auto parts from 3 April remain limited for India's auto industry and may even present an opportunity for domestic exporters, think tank GTRI said on Thursday. "An analysis of India's auto and auto component exports in calendar year 2024 suggests that the impact of these tariffs on Indian exporters will be minimal," Global Trade Research Initiative (GTRI) Founder Ajay Srivastava said.

In the case of passenger cars, the think tank said India exported a modest USD 8.9 million worth of vehicles to the US in 2024, which is just 0.13 per cent of the country's total exports of USD 6.98 billion.

He said this negligible exposure implies the tariffs will have no real effect on India's thriving car export business and in other categories too, US exposure is either low or manageable. *—PTI*

Foreign Institutional Investors (FIIs) bought equities worth Rs 2,240.55 crore on Wednesday **PHOTO: X**

Sensex rebounds with 300 points on buying in RIL

MUMBAI, 27 MARCH

Stock market benchmark indices rebounded on Thursday after falling sharply in the previous session as continuous foreign fund inflows and buying in blue-chip Reliance Industries, L&T, and Bajaj Finance supported the recovery. However, selling in auto counters and subdued pharma stocks amid uncertainties over Trump tariffs limited the gains in domestic equities, traders said.

The 30-share BSE benchmark Sensex climbed 317.93 points or 0.41 per cent to settle at 77,606.43. During the day, it surged 458.96 points or 0.59 per cent to 77,747.46.

The NSE Nifty rallied 105.10 points or 0.45 per cent to 23,591.95.

From the Sensex pack, Bajaj Finserv, IndusInd Bank, NTPC, Larsen & Toubro, UltraTech Cement, Adani Ports, Bajaj Finance, Power Grid, Zomato, State Bank of India, HDFC Bank and Titan were the biggest gainers.

Sun Pharma, Kotak Mahindra Bank, Bharti Airtel, HCL Tech and Mahindra & Mahindra were also among the laggards.

Foreign Institutional Investors (FIIs) bought equities worth Rs 2,240.55 crore on Wednesday, according to exchange data.

Global oil benchmark Brent crude dipped 0.23 per cent to USD 73.62 a barrel.

The BSE benchmark gauge tanked 728.69 points or 0.93 per cent to settle at 77,288.50 on Wednesday. The Nifty dropped 181.80 points or 0.77 per cent to 23,486.85. *—PTI*

Gold rises ₹365 to reclaim ₹91,000 mark

NEW DELHI, 27 MARCH

Gold prices increased by Rs 365 to Rs 91,050 per 10g in the national capital on Thursday amid a strong trend in the overseas markets, according to the All India Sarafa Association. The precious metal of 99.9 per cent purity had closed at Rs 90,685 per 10g on Wednesday. Silver prices also went up by Rs 200 to Rs 1,01,700 per kg. It had ended at Rs 1,01,500 per kg on Wednesday.

Meanwhile, gold futures for April delivery surged by Rs 828 or 0.94 per cent to trade near a record high of Rs 88,466 per 10 grams on the Multi Commodity Exchange (MCX).

On 20 March, the yellow metal prices rose to hit a lifetime high of Rs 89,796 per 10g.

Spot gold in the international markets climbed by USD 34.77 or 1.15 per cent to trade near a record high of USD 3,054.05 per ounce. *—PTI*

Rupee falls 8P to settle at 85.77 against USD

MUMBAI, 27 MARCH

The rupee weakened by 8 paise to close at 85.77 against the US dollar on Thursday, as month-end dollar demand from importers, coupled with the greenback's recovery against major currencies, weighed on the rupee. Forex dealers said the rupee is also facing renewed pressure on liquidity constraints, concerns over reciprocal tariff implementations and month-end demand for the US currency from importers. However, positive domestic markets and foreign fund inflows cushioned the downside. At the interbank foreign exchange, the rupee opened at 85.90 and touched the high of 85.73 against the greenback during the day. The unit later turned volatile and hit the day's low of 85.93 before ending the session at 85.77 (provisional) against the dollar, 8 paise lower from its previous closing level. *—PTI*

HUDCO to raise ₹2,000 cr through bonds

NEW DELHI, 27 MARCH

State-owned Housing and Urban Development Corporation Ltd (HUDCO) is planning to raise up to Rs 2,000 crore through the issue of bonds on a private placement basis. In a regulatory filing on Thursday, HUDCO said the Bond Allotment Committee has approved the raising of bonds as unsecured, taxable, redeemable, non-convertible, non-cumulative NCDs (non-convertible debentures) of face value of Rs 1,00,000 each aggregating up to Rs 2,000 crore on a private placement basis. The coupon rate is 7.19 per cent. Bonds are redeemable at par at the end of the 10th year while interest payment will be on a yearly basis. The base issue size is Rs 500 crore with greenshoe option of Rs 1,500 crore, taking the total issue size to Rs 2,000 crore. *—PTI*

Helmets maker Studds files IPO papers with SEBI

NEW DELHI, 27 MARCH

Helmets manufacturer Studds Accessories has filed preliminary papers with capital markets regulator Sebi to float an initial public offering (IPO). This marks the company's second attempt to go public. Previously, the company had filed draft papers nearly seven years ago. The IPO will be an offer for sale (OFS), with the promoter group and other shareholders selling 77.9 lakh shares, according to the draft red herring prospectus (DRHP) filed on Wednesday. Studds Accessories designs, manufactures, markets and sells two-wheeler helmets under the 'Studds' and 'SMK' brands and other accessories such as two-wheeler luggage, gloves, helmet locking device, rain suits, riding jacket and eye wear under the 'Studds' brand *—PTI*

Starlink likely to have limited impact on telcos

NEW DELHI, 27 MARCH

PHOTO: X

Starlink's satellite-based broadband services are eyeing the Indian market, but its entry is unlikely to disrupt local telecom operators, according to Jefferies' latest report. The report highlights that Starlink's current capacity can support up to 0.18 million subscribers in India, with a potential to reach 5.7 million by 2030. However, the "limited capacity" could drive premium pricing, similar to its strategy in other markets.

India's vast geography makes it an attractive market for Starlink, but the launch is expected to have minimal impact on telcos. The report notes that the government is balancing the interests of both satellite operators and telecom companies, which is reassuring for incumbents like Jio and Bharti Airtel.

Starlink currently has about 4.6 million subscribers globally, with North America being its largest market. The report also mentions that Low Earth Orbit (LEO) satellite networks like Starlink target larger countries, with India, the 7th largest by area, becoming increasingly important. However, Starlink's reach is limited as it does not have access to the top two largest countries, Russia and China.

In terms of pricing, Starlink has charged 2-3 times more than traditional telcos in both high and low-income markets. Despite the potential growth, Jefferies estimates Starlink will serve only 5.7 million subscribers by 2030, a small fraction of India's growing fixed-line broadband market, which currently serves 46 million users.

Overall, Starlink's entry is unlikely to significantly affect Indian telcos, given its premium pricing and reliance on partnerships for distribution and backhaul. *—PTI*

GOVT APPROVES PROCUREMENT OF 37L TONNE OF GRAM

NEW DELHI, 27 MARCH

The government approved procurement of 37.39 lakh tonnes of gram and lentils, and 28.28 lakh tonnes of mustard for the 2025 rabi marketing season, Agriculture Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan said on Thursday.

The government will procure the commodities through central nodal agencies Nafed and NCCF under the Price Support Scheme (PSS), with Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh and Gujarat being the major growing states.

Chouhan said the procurement of pulses includes 27.99 lakh tonnes of gram and 9.40 lakh tonnes of lentil.

On kharif (summer) pulses, he said tur procurement has reached 2.46 lakh tonnes, benefiting 1.71 lakh farmers. Tur, urad and lentil are being procured from nine states, including Andhra Pradesh, Gujarat and Maharashtra.

The purchase period in Karnataka has been extended by 30 days to 1 May.

In the Budget 2025, the government announced procurement of these pulses for the next four years to achieve self-sufficiency *—PTI*

15-HOUR OPERATION

BIS raids Amazon and Flipkart, seizes substandard goods

NEW DELHI, 27 MARCH

The Bureau of Indian Standards (BIS) has conducted extensive raids on Amazon and Flipkart warehouses here, seizing thousands of products lacking proper quality certifications, the government said on Thursday.

In a 15-hour operation on 19 March at an Amazon Sellers Pvt Ltd warehouse in Mohan Cooperative Industrial Area, BIS officials confiscated more than 3,500 electrical products, including geysers and food mixers, valued at approximately Rs 70 lakh.

A separate raid at Instakart Services, a Flipkart subsidiary, resulted in the seizure of 590 pairs of sports footwear without required manufacturing marks, worth around Rs 6 lakh, an official statement said.

This operation is part of a broader nationwide drive by BIS to enforce quality standards. In the past month, similar raids were conducted in multiple locations, including Delhi, Gurugram, Faridabad, Lucknow, and Sriperumbudur.

These raids are critical to ensuring consumer safety and maintaining product quality standards, the statement added.

Currently, 769 product categories require mandatory certification from Indian regulators. Selling or distributing these items without proper licensing can result in legal penalties, including potential imprisonment and fines under the BIS Act of 2016. *—PTI*

A separate raid at Instakart Services resulted in the seizure of 590 pairs of sports footwear **PHOTO: X**

BSNL revenue impacted by 4G delay, stiff competition: MoS

NEW DELHI, 27 MARCH

PHOTO: X

Revenue of BSNL has been impacted due to delay in the rollout of 4G services as well as stiff competition in the mobile segment, Parliament was informed on Thursday.

In a written reply to Rajya Sabha, Minister of State for telecom, Pemmasani Chandra Sekhar said BSNL has awarded purchase orders for one lakh 4G sites out of which 83,993 sites have been installed and 74,521 are on air as on 8 March.

"The revenue of BSNL is impacted due to delay in rollout of 4G services as well as stiff competition in the mobile segment," the minister said.

In response to a question on voluntary retirement scheme, Sekhar said the government approved the first revival package in 2019 to reduce the operating cost of BSNL by debt restructuring through sovereign guarantee bonds as well as VRS.

"After implementation of VRS in 2019, the employee cost of BSNL got reduced by 51 per cent. As a result of the above, BSNL started earning operating profit from 2020-21. At present, no proposal for VRS in BSNL is under consideration in the department," the minister said. *—PTI*

Housing sales may fall 28% in 2025: Anarock

NEW DELHI, 27 MARCH

Housing sales are estimated to decline 28 per cent in January-March period across seven major cities to 93,280 units due to high prices and global uncertainties, according to Anarock.

Real estate consultant Anarock, one of the leading housing brokerages, said, "Skyrocketing residential prices coupled with geopolitical headwinds have slowed the Indian housing market's bull-run in Q1,2025."

As per the data, the total housing sales are estimated at 93,280 units in January-March 2025, a 28 per cent decline from 1,30,170 units in the year-ago period.

Among seven major cities, Delhi-NCR is expected to witness a fall of 20 per cent in sales to 12,520 units from 15,650 units.

In Mumbai, sales of residential properties are estimated to decline 26 per cent to 31,610 units from 42,920 units.

Housing sales in Bengaluru are seen falling 16 per cent to 15,000 units from 17,790 units.

In Pune, sales could drop 30 per cent to 16,100 units from 22,990 units.

Housing sales in Hyderabad are expected to fall 49 per cent to 10,100 units from 19,660 units. Chennai is expected to see a 26 per cent decline in sales to 4,050 units from 5,510 units. *—PTI*

PHOTO: X

Youth prefer UPI for daily transactions: Report

NEW DELHI, 27 MARCH

PHOTO: X

The youngsters in India prefer UPI for daily transactions but credit card is also a major choice among youths for bigger purchases due to interest-free credit facility by it, highlighted a survey by Kiwi and Unomer.

The survey found that 70 per cent of young consumers use UPI for daily small expenses, and 81 per cent prefer UPI for in-person transactions. The biggest reason for this preference is its widespread acceptance, with 85 per cent agreeing that UPI is accepted at more places than credit cards.

However, many users are also concerned about the immediate deduction of funds from their savings, with 74 per cent disliking this aspect of UPI.

The survey found that 81 per cent consider the interest-free credit period the biggest advantage of credit cards. This allows users to manage their expenses better without immediate financial strain.

Additionally, young consumers are highly focused on rewards and discounts while making payments. The survey revealed that 77 per cent of shoppers' research rewards and prices before making a purchase, and 56 per cent

IN 2024

Quick com corners 2/3rd of all e-grocery orders

NEW DELHI, 27 MARCH

PHOTO: X

More than two-thirds of all e-grocery orders and one-tenth of e-retail spends happened on quick commerce platforms in 2024. This underlines how QCom - with its promise of under 30-minute delivery - is "revolutionising" the way consumers buy in India, according to a report by Flipkart and Bain and Company.

Q-commerce is slated to grow at over 40 per cent annually through 2030, fuelled by expansion across categories, geographies, and customer segments, it said.

"India's unique structural advantages, including high population density and close access to a network of low-rent dark stores, have enabled this growth," it observed.

Q-commerce has since attracted multiple players, which has made the consumer value proposition richer.

While quick commerce began with groceries, 15-20 per cent of its gross merchandise value or GMV now comes from categories such as general merchandise, mobile phones, electronics, and apparel.

Expansion beyond major cities has also fuelled growth, though the top six metros still account for the lion's share of GMV.

According to the report, the Q-commerce players have improved unit economics by increasing order values, lowering supply chain costs, and enhancing gross margins (via direct sourcing from producers and farmers, and deploying monetisation levers such as advertising and platform fees).

The Flipkart-Bain report titled 'How India shops online 2025' said the country has become a retail powerhouse over the last decade, ascending to the third largest retail market globally in 2024.

The Indian e-retail market has surged to almost USD 60 billion in gross merchandise value (GMV). *—PTI*

RCB look up to batters to end 17-year Chennai jinx

Royal Challengers have beaten CSK only once at Chepauk

Virat Kohli poses with fans in Chennai ahead of RCB vs CSK

PHOTO: X/RCB

RCB VS CSK

HEAD TO HEAD	
PLAYED:	34
CSK Won:	21
RCB Won:	12

RCB vs CSK Match starts at **7.30 pm IST**

CHENNAI, 27 MARCH

Royal Challengers Bengaluru's hopes of exorcising a 17-year jinx hinge on their experienced batting unit finding its range when they face familiar foes Chennai Super Kings in their IPL match here on Friday.

The Royal Challengers have beaten the Super Kings only once at Chepauk in the tournament's inaugural edition in 2008. In the current RCB squad, only star batter Virat Kohli was part of that moment, and now he would like to breach the CSK's fortress for a second time.

But that's easy to dream about. As ever, the Chennai outfit is constructed to win its home matches on a pitch that offers considerable help to spinners. They have the ever-familiar Ravindra Jadeja and have brought back 'old boy' Ravichandran Ashwin through last year's players' auction.

The Chennai side has also added Afghanistan left-arm wrist spinner Noor Ahmad to the squad, and the troika did well against fellow five-time champions Mumbai Indians a few days back.

The triumvirate bowled 11 overs against Mumbai, conceding an appreciable 70 runs for five wickets.

The pitch is, and the RCB batters, led by Kohli, will have to lift their game several notches to outwit an experienced bowling unit.

Outwit is the key word here. The Royal Challengers' batting unit should be cleverer than downright aggressive to score off CSK's three-pronged spin unit, and Kohli should lead that charge.

Negating spin has not always been a strong point of Kohli's batting, but in the last two years or so, he has shown massive improvement in that department.

Central to that change is his willingness to play more sweep/slog sweeps against spinners, and Kohli will have to bring all that expertise to the table on a blockbuster Friday evening.

But then Kohli alone won't be able to tackle a competent bowling machine, and he will require full-hearted support from Phil Salt, skipper Rajat Patidar, Liam Livingstone, Jitesh Sharma, etc. —*PTI*

A huge challenge for RCB to go to Chepauk: Watson

CHENNAI, 27 MARCH

Former Australian all-rounder Shane Watson said Royal Challengers Bengaluru will have to tweak their team composition to suit the demands of the Chepauk pitch in their second IPL match against Chennai Super Kings here on Friday.

The Royal Challengers are coming off a fine win over Kolkata Knight Riders, but Watson believes that they will face a bigger challenge against Chennai.

"It's going to be a huge challenge for RCB to go to Chepauk, especially given the quality of bowlers CSK have at their disposal. RCB will likely need to adjust its team composition to counter CSK's strengths. But make no mistake -- Chepauk is a fortress," said Watson, a JioStar expert.

Watson, who played for both CSK and RCB in his IPL career, cited the presence of quality spinners in Chennai's ranks as the primary reason for their dominance at their home venue.

CSK's entire setup is built around excelling in Chennai. Just look at the three spinners who bowled brilliantly in their opening game against MI: Ashwin, Jadeja, and Noor Ahmad. They are going to be a real handful on that surface.

"Seeing Noor Ahmad make such an impact in his first game for CSK will only boost the team's confidence, knowing they have another wicket-taking option," he added.

Watson, who was a part of the Rajasthan Royals' title run in 2008, said his former club is thin on spin resources, and it was revealed in the match against the Knight Riders. —*PTI*

Pegula topples Emma to enter Miami semifinal

MIAMI, 27 MARCH

America's No. 4 seed **Jessica Pegula** completed the semifinal lineup at the Miami Open with a 6-4, 6-7(3), 6-2 victory over Briton Emma Raducanu on Thursday (IST) at Hard Rock Stadium.

The American advanced to her third semifinal in Miami in the last four years by topping the 2021 US Open champion for a second time in three career meetings.

Pegula failed to seal the match in two sets after a strong rally from Raducanu in the second, where she saved four set points and fought back from a 5-2 deficit to force a tiebreak. Despite receiving medical treatment on a muggy Miami evening, Raducanu kept pushing hard. However, an early break of serve in the third set gave Pegula a lead she never gave up.

Fils upsets Zverev

France's **Arthur Fils** upset top-seed Alexander Zverev with an outstanding display, earning him a 3-6, 6-3, 6-4 win over the German in the fourth round of the Miami Open on Wednesday.

The 20-year-old Frenchman will face 19-year-old Czech Jakub Mensik in the quarterfinals with both players chasing their first Masters 1000 semifinal spot.

Rallying from a set down, Fils showed great determination to fight his way back and go 4-1 up in the second set. —*PTI*

"I'm used to bowling with someone better than me"
-Moeen Ali, KKR all rounder

"The Impact Player rule in the IPL is working at the moment"
-Glenn Phillips, Gujarat Titans all-rounder

Cricket dream shattered: Rishit Nathawani

NEW DELHI, 27 MARCH

Para table tennis player Rishit Nathawani always wanted to become a professional cricketer, but a devastating sports injury during a casual kabaddi match in 2017 left him paralysed from the neck down.But Nathwani didn't lose hope. He turned to para table tennis to continue his sports journey and won the gold medal in the men's Class 5 event at the Khelo India Para Games 2025 here."I got hurt in my back," Nathwani recalls."There was internal bleeding, which caused my nerves to break, and the spine moved a little. This caused paralysis from the neck down."The prognosis was grim.—*PTI*

PHOTO: X

Karmakar's suspension will be discussed: NRAI

NEW DELHI, 27 MARCH

The suspension of Arjuna award recipient Joydeep Karmakar from all shooting activities in West Bengal by the state body will be "discussed at the appropriate level", the National Rifle Association of India (NRAI) said on Thursday.The West Bengal Rifle Association's (WBRA) move to bar Karmakar, currently a rifle coach, from activities related to shooting in the state came after the Olympian questioned selections for the 2025 National Games held in Uttarakhand early this year."That will be discussed at the appropriate level. It (Karmakar's letter) came yesterday. It will go to the NRAI president," said NRAI secretary Rajiv Bhatia. Karmakar represented India in rifle prone events in various international tournaments and narrowly missed a medal at the Rio Olympics in 2016.The WBRA said, before going ahead with its decision to suspend him, it had shown cause to Karmakar for an objectionable post on the social networking site Facebook.—*PTI*

Russian wrestler banned for 2 years for cancer drug

LAUSANNE, 27 MARCH

Russian wrestler Dmitry Baboryko was banned for two years Thursday after taking a breast cancer drug that counters the effects of using steroids.Baboryko tested positive for tamoxifen at the under-23 world championships in October in Albania, the International Testing Agency said in announcing the ban on behalf of the United World Wrestling governing body. He accepted the two-year sanction including being disqualified and stripped of the silver medal from the heavyweight 130-kilogram class in Greco-Roman wrestling, the ITA said.—*PTI*

India to play Thailand and Iraq in AFC WAC Qualifiers

NEW DELHI, 27 MARCH

The India senior women's team was on Thursday drawn alongside Thailand, Mongolia, Timor Leste, and Iraq in Group B of the AFC Women's Asian Cup Australia 2026 Qualifiers. The draw was conducted at the AFC House in Kuala Lumpur.Thailand will host Group B of the Qualifiers between 23 June to 5 July in a centralised single round-robin format. The group winners will qualify for the final tournament, scheduled to be staged across three host cities in Australia from 1 to 26 March, 2026. Teams were divided into five pots as per seedings based on the FIFA women's world ranking published on 6 March.—*PTI*

SENIOR ASIAN C'SHIP

Hooda in line for first gold

AMMAN, 27 MARCH

Putting up an expected dominating show, Olympian Reetika Hooda reached the final of the women's 76kg category at the Asian Championship without losing a point, while three of her compatriots advanced to the bronze medal contention, here on Thursday. The 22-year-old Reetika, who became first Indian female wrestler to be crowned U23 World Champion and youngest to qualify for Olympics, outclassed Japan's Nodok Yamamoto and Korea's Seoyeon Jeong on her way to the gold medal bout.

She began the scoring with a take-down move and followed that up with a single-leg attack to add two more to her kitty. Reetika ended the bout in a jiffy when she got hold of the Korean's legs and employed the 'fitley' move.

Against Yamamoto, the U23 World bronze medallist, Reetika followed the same pattern and in the second period found a way to pin her rival when she had a 6-0 lead. —*PTI*

ITF, Kosmos end Davis Cup legal dispute

LONDON, 27 MARCH

The International Tennis Federation has settled its dispute with investment group Kosmos after their Davis Cup partnership was abruptly terminated in 2023.

"Kosmos and the International Tennis Federation (ITF) have reached an amicable resolution regarding their previous contractual disagreements related to the organisation of the Davis Cup," the ITF said in a statement on Thursday.

Owned by former Barcelona soccer player Gerard Piqué, Kosmos signed a 25-year deal worth $3 billion to co-run the men's Davis Cup team competition in 2018.

At the time, the ITF said the deal would safeguard the historic Davis Cup competition and allow them to invest in all levels of the sport and "deliver long-term benefits for players, nations, fans, sponsors and broadcasters".

The controversial revamp of the Davis Cup, including the ditching of the traditional 'home and away' knockout rounds, was launched in 2019 to much fanfare with 18 nations competing in "The Finals" in Madrid, dubbed the World Cup of tennis.

After the 2020 edition was cancelled because of the pandemic, it returned in 2021 with three cities hosting the finals, and the format was changed again in 2022. —*PTI*

Mings named on Euro 2028 board of directors

LONDON, 27 MARCH

Aston Villa defender Tyrone Mings was named on Thursday on the board of directors for the European Championship in Britain and Ireland in 2028. The 32-year-old Mings is the only player among the three independent non-executive directors helping to organize the tournament. Mings has played for Villa since 2019 and has made 18 appearances for England, for which he was part of the squad at the 2021 tournament. He has missed large chunks of the past two seasons because of injuries and will be 35 when Euro 2028 takes place, likely meaning he won't be involved in the England squad then.

Confirmation of Mings' involvement came in the announcement of the company — officially named "UK & Ireland 2028 Limited" — tasked with delivering Euro 2028. English Football Association chair Debbie Hewitt will also chair the Euro 2028 board.

The men's Euros, held every four years, is the foundation of UEFA's finances and funds development payments to its members. —*PTI*

Red Bull confirms Tsunoda to replace Lawson

DUBAI, 27 MARCH

Red Bull has confirmed that they will demote Liam Lawson and replace him with Yuki Tsunoda with immediate effect.

The decision comes after Lawson had completed just two grands prix for Red Bull, and three months after Tsunoda was passed over for the New Zealander as a replacement for Sergio Perez.

Tsunoda, 24, will partner Max Verstappen at Red Bull from the next race in Japan on 4-6 April, while Lawson will return to the second team Racing Bulls as teammate to French rookie Isack Hadjar.Red Bull team principal Christian Horner said in a statement: "It has been difficult to see Liam struggle with the RB21 at the first two races and as a result we have collectively taken the decision to make an early switch."Red Bull are third in the constructors' championship after two races, behind McLaren and Mercedes, and Verstappen has expressed his belief that their car may be only the fourth fastest in the field. The Dutchman was a close second behind race-winner Lando Norris' McLaren in the wet season-opening Australian Grand Prix, and fourth at the Chinese race last weekend.

Yuki Tsunoda and Liam Lawson
PHOTO: X

Lawson qualified 18th in Melbourne and crashed out of the race.

In China, he qualified last for both the sprint and the grand prix, and finished 14th and 12th.

His finishing position in the grand prix in Shanghai was boosted by the disqualifications of both Ferraris and Pierre Gasly's Alpine, without which he would have been 15th.Horner's statement said: "We acknowledge there is a lot of work to be done with the RB21 and Yuki's experience will prove highly beneficial in helping to develop the current car." —*PTI*

WOMEN'S CHAMPIONS LEAGUE

Lyon outclasses Bayern with 4-1 win to reach SFs

LYON, 27 MARCH

Kadidiatou Diani scored one goal and set up two more as Lyon outclassed Bayern Munich 4-1 in the second leg of their Women's Champions League quarterfinal.

The French powerhouse needed a wake-up call before reaching the semifinals for the 13th time. Klara Bühl opened the scoring in the 33rd minute off the far post to claw a goal back for Bayern after losing the first leg 2-0 in Munich.

Lyon, the eight-time champion, emerged reinvigorated after the break and went on to wrap up a 6-1 victory on aggregate with Diani scoring and setting up goals for Melchie Dumornay and Tabitha Chawinga, who both scored in Munich last week.

Lyon are into the Champions League semi-finals PHOTO: X

Dumornay played in Ada Hegerberg to seal the rout with a flourish by shooting the ball between Bayern goalkeeper Maria-Luisa "Mala" Grohs' legs in stoppage time. —*PTI*

Arsenal comeback stuns Madrid

Alessia Russo scored twice and Arsenal staged a remarkable comeback to reach the Women's Champions League semi-finals with a 3-0 win over Real Madrid. Mariona Caldentey scored the other as Arsenal grabbed three goals in 13 minutes to overturn the team's 2-0 loss in the first leg of the quarterfinal in the Spanish capital last week.

Argentina hopes Messi will play at 2026 World Cup

BUENOS AIRES, 27 MARCH

Argentina is proving it can win without Lionel Messi, just in case he opts not to play in the 2026 World Cup.

After Argentina secured a spot in next year's competition, the main question now is whether the 37-year-old star will play in his sixth tournament and try to win back-to-back championships.

"We will see what happens, there's plenty of time," Argentina coach Lionel Scaloni said. "We must go one game at a time, otherwise we will be speaking about the same thing the rest of the year, and we need to leave him alone, we will see. He will decide it whenever he wants, let's not drive him crazy with this." On Tuesday, hours after Argentina qualified for the next World Cup, it went out and handed Brazil its worst-ever loss in World Cup qualifying, a 4-1 thrashing. That was days after Argentina's 1-0 victory over Uruguay. Both victories came without Messi. The eight-time Ballon d'Or winner had been ruled out after sustaining a low-grade adductor muscle injury.

Messi, who captained Argentina to the 2022 World Cup title in Qatar. —*PTI*